

North in News

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Won't stop until narco-terrorism is eliminated in J-K: LG Manoj Sinha

SRINAGAR, MAY 25 : In a major push against narco-terror in Jammu and Kashmir, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday led a massive padayatra in Bandipora to galvanise support for the cause.

"Forty-five days ago, I pledged not only to dismantle the smugglers and narco-terrorists ecosystem, but also to spark a movement that uplifts youth and restores dignity to families scarred by addiction," the lieutenant governor said.



Sinha said Jammu and Kashmir is united, strong in resolve, clear in purpose and fully committed to freeing the society from drugs once and for all.

"The action against narco-terrorists and drug smugglers will continue. It will not stop until every drug smuggler is eliminated from the sacred soil of Jammu and Kashmir. Our agencies have launched an unprecedented drive to dismantle narco-terrorists and their hidden network. No drug smuggler, drug peddler, or anyone seeking to poison our society is beyond reach. The entire narco-terror ecosystem is being pursued," he said.

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Operation 'Sherwali' to track down suspected terrorists enters third day in Rajouri

JAMMU, MAY 25 : A search operation to track down suspected terrorists believed to be hiding in the dense woods of Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district entered the third consecutive day on Monday, officials said. A joint team of the Army, Jammu and Kashmir Police and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) had launched the operation in the area on Saturday following specific inputs about the movement of suspected terrorists. An encounter broke out between terrorists and security forces in the Dormal-Gambhir Moghla



belt on Saturday following the launch of Operation 'Sherwali'. The operation to track down suspected terrorists is going on amid a strong cordon. Surveillance has also been put in place," they said. Armed with drones and sniffer dogs, joint teams have expanded the searches to adjoining areas, intensifying operations and strengthening the cordon with the induction of additional troops to track down suspected terrorists believed to be hiding in the area, officials said.

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NEET Paper Leak: NTA has not learnt lessons, says SC; issues notices on pleas



NEW DELHI, MAY 25: The Supreme Court on Monday said that NTA has not learnt lessons from the earlier NEET paper leak as it sought response from the Centre, NTA and CBI on pleas for replacement of the testing agency with a

robust and autonomous body to conduct the medical entrance exam. A bench of Justices PS Narasimha and Alok Aradhia directed that copy of petitions be served to Solicitor General Tushar Mehta besides other parties

(Contd on Pg 2)

Petrol, diesel prices hiked for 4th time in 11 days; petrol tops Rs 100 across most cities

NEW DELHI, MAY 25 : Petrol prices were raised by Rs 2.61 a litre and diesel by Rs 2.71 on Monday, the fourth increase in less than two weeks that extended a delayed pass-through of soaring global crude oil costs triggered by the Iran conflict. The latest increase took cumulative hikes since May 15 to nearly Rs 7.5 per litre. In Delhi, petrol prices rose to Rs 102.12 per litre from Rs 99.51, while diesel climbed to Rs 95.20 from Rs 92.49, according to industry sources. Fuel prices have now reached their highest levels since



May 2022 after remaining largely frozen for more than two years, barring a Rs 2-per-litre cut in March 2024 ahead of national elections. The hike came as global oil prices fell sharply amid tentative hopes for a deal to end the US-Israel war on Iran. Brent crude, the primary benchmark for global oil prices, fell more than 5 per cent after the US and Iran agreed in principle to reopen the Strait of Hormuz. Global crude oil prices had surged more than 50 per cent since late

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NIA conducts raids in Kashmir in terror-funding case linked to banned Jamaat-e-Islami

SRINAGAR, MAY 25 : The National Investigation Agency on Monday conducted searches in the Kashmir Valley as part of its probe into a terror-funding case linked to the banned Jamaat-e-Islami. The searches, conducted at three locations in Srinagar and Shopian districts of Kashmir, led to the recovery of several incriminating financial documents and electronic gadgets suspected to be related to the activities of Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) and its various trusts/associations in J-K. Officers of the National Investigation Agency



(NIA) carried out searches at the Darul Uloom Siregal Uloom, a school in the Imam Sahib area of Shopian, which was declared an "illegal entity" last month, official sources said. Searches were also conducted at the residence of the former JeI chief, Shahzad Aurangzeb, at the Darul Uloom Siregal Uloom, a school in the Imam Sahib area of Shopian, and at the Jamiat ul Banaat, a religious school for girls in Srinagar's Lal Bazar area. The federal anti-terror agency has been probing the separatist and secessionist activities of

(Contd on Pg 2)

BRIEF NEWS

Forest fire breaks out in Rajouri, vast forest area damaged

JAMMU, MAY 25 : A major forest fire broke out in the Nowshera belt of Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district on Monday, causing extensive damage to large tracts of forest land, officials said.

The blaze erupted under mysterious circumstances and quickly spread to several areas in the Nowshera region, fanned by dry vegetation and prevailing weather conditions, they added. Soon after receiving information about the incident, teams of the Forest Department, Jammu and Kashmir Fire and Emergency Services, and local volunteers launched a massive operation to contain the fire and prevent it from spreading further. A

(Contd on Pg 2)

CBI arrests Junior Assistant in Jammu for taking bribe

NEW DELHI, MAY 25: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested a Junior Assistant, working in the office of the Superintending Engineer, PHE Mechanical Urban Circle, Narwal, Jammu, in a bribery case, the release said.

The CBI registered the instant case on Sunday against the said accused based on a complaint alleging that the accused demanded a bribe of Rs. 4,500 from the complainant for processing and clearing the pension case of the complainant. The accused had shared the QR Code through WhatsApp for receiving the alleged bribe amount.

(Contd on Pg 2)

Over 300 tourists rescued in 7-hr operation after Gulmarg Gondola malfunctions amid heavy rain

SRINAGAR, MAY 25 : Over 300 tourists were left stranded mid-air for hours inside 65 cabins of the famous Gulmarg Gondola cable car after a major technical snag halted Asia's highest ropeway, causing panic among the holidaymakers before they were rescued. A massive, multi-agency rescue operation that lasted seven hours ensured the safe evacuation of all passengers, some of whom were trapped in cabins dangling nearly 500 ft above the ground, officials said. Operations for both phases of the cable car service were immedi-



ately suspended following the glitch, which occurred around noon. The rescue operation was hampered by heavy rain in the area, they said. Teams from the National Disaster Response

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Force (NDRF), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), the Jammu and Kashmir Police and the Indian Army's Chinari Corps worked jointly for hours to complete the safe evacuation of all people, the officials said. The trained teams used ropes and ladders to bring the tourists down safely. "The rescue operation has concluded, and all the stranded persons have been evacuated safely," an official said this evening. Earlier, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said his government was "closely monitoring"

(Contd on Pg 2)

Court Rejects Anticipatory Bail to Advocate in Jammu Court Assault Case



JAMMU, MAY-25(JNF): 2nd Additional Sessions Judge, Jammu Anoop Kumar Sharma, has rejected the anticipatory bail plea of Ahmed Din, an advocate, in connection with FIR No. 56/2026 reg-

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LG Saxena launches integrated ease of doing business portal to transform citizen services in Ladakh



LEH, MAY 25: In a transformative step towards strengthening digital governance and promoting a business-friendly ecosystem in Ladakh, Lt. Governor, Vinai Kumar Saxena, today launched an integrated 'Ease of Doing Business Portal' in Ladakh. The portal, <https://eodl.ladakh.gov.in>, launched for the first time in Ladakh, is aimed at ushering in a major reform, by simplifying citizen ser-

CM Omar Abdullah hands over compassionate appointment letters to beneficiaries under SRO-43, Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme

SRINAGAR, MAY 25: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today handed over appointment orders to beneficiaries under SRO-43 and the J&K Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme (RAS) at the Civil Secretariat here, reaffirming the government's commitment towards supporting families who have suffered irreparable personal loss.

Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary, Minister for Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Satish Sharma, Chief Secretary Aital Dullao, Additional Chief

Secretary to the Chief Minister, officers and



beneficiaries participated in the event through video conferencing. A total of 52 appointees hailing from different districts of Jammu and Kashmir received appointment orders under SRO-43 and RAS during simultane-

(Contd on Pg 2)

ous events held in Srinagar and Jammu. Addressing the newly-appointed beneficiaries, the Chief Minister said that the government was only fulfilling its responsibility and not extending any favour. "The first thing I would like to say is that the government has given you these orders here and in Jammu is not doing you a favour; it is our duty. While fulfilling this duty, we also realise that you have had to make a huge sacrifice to get these government orders," the Chief Minister said. Drawing a distinction between ordinary

(Contd on Pg 2)

Govt grants special casual leave on third day of Eid-ul-Azha

SRINAGAR, MAY 25 : Jammu and Kashmir Government on Monday sanctioned a special one-day casual leave for employees of the Union Territory on May 29, marking the third day of Eid-ul-Azha. An order to this effect was issued by the General Administration Department. "Sanction is hereby accorded to the grant of one day special casual leave on 29th May 2026 (Friday), in favour of the employees of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir who wish to avail the leave on account of observance of Eid-ul-Azha," the order stated. Meanwhile the ruling Jammu and Kashmir National Conference compared the decision with the West Bengal government's reported move to reduce Eid-ul-Azha public holidays from two days to one. "Couple of days ago, BJP government in West Bengal downsize Eid ul Zuba holidays from two days to one. Today JKNC government expanded Eid

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FROM PAGE ONE

Won't stop...

Sinha said several drug supply networks that remained hidden until now are being traced and dismantled, and asserted that drug cartels that "thrived for decades are being wiped out".

"We have sent a clear message that Jammu Kashmir will not be a safe haven for those who profit from other people's sufferings. I am determined that we will root out every narco-terrorist and drug smuggler from this soil," he said.

"Those who tried to destroy our families will have their existence erased from this land. The law is now being applied firmly. Narco-terrorists are being punished, youth are being protected, families are being supported, and renewed hope is returning to society," he added.

Sinha said the administration will soon come out with a comprehensive rehabilitation policy, which will ensure that every young person trapped by addiction gets a chance to rejoin the mainstream.

"Our aim is that not a single young person is left behind. We will provide jobs, opportunities, and the means for them to live with dignity. I strongly believe the success of a drug-free Jammu and Kashmir will not be measured only by the number of drug smugglers arrested, but by the number of lives we can rebuild. It will be measured by the homes that can be restored and the young people who can fulfill their dreams. I promise you that we will not rest until their dreams are realised," the lieutenant governor said.

Sinha said the government alone cannot win the battle against drugs and that it needs the support of families, teachers, religious leaders, and every responsible citizen. On the occasion, Lieutenant Governor Sinha inaugurated the Waqar Knowledge Centre, a rehabilitation initiative under the Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyan (drug-free India campaign).

The Waqar Knowledge Centre was established by the Bandipora administration to provide recovering addiction cases with a constructive platform for rehabilitation, engagement, and reintegration.

The initiative reinforces the message that individuals seeking to leave the path of substance abuse behind have access to a range of government-supported opportunities and support systems.

Operation...

was established to a brief exchange of fire after contact was established with the suspected terrorists, prompting security forces to continue extensive searches in the forested terrain. According to preliminary reports, the movement of two to three vehicles was suspected in the area. The Army's White Knight Corps said on X that contact was established with terrorists around 11:30 am on Saturday in the general area of Gambhir Moghla during an intelligence-based joint operation carried out with the police and CRPF.

NEET Paper...

and asked the National Testing Agency (NTA), which is responsible for conducting the NEET exam, to file an affidavit by Thursday on compliance of directions issued by the court in 2024. "It's sad that they have not learnt their lessons. The matter referred to this court earlier also. There was a committee, a monitoring committee which made some recommendations and they were accepted. We want NTA to file an affidavit on the steps taken for compliance of recommendations suggested by the committee," the bench said. The top court, which issued notice on a plea filed by the Federation of All India Medical Association (FAIMA), through lawyer Tanvi Dubey said it is tagging all the similar matters together. It directed the Centre-appointed committee led by former Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chief K Radhakrishnan for overhaul of the functioning of the NTA to detail the steps taken for compliance of its directions. The medical body has urged the top court for direct restructuring or replacement of NTA with a robust and autonomous system to conduct NEETUG, citing a "direct assault" on the fundamental rights of over 22.7 lakh students through recurring paper leaks.

It has also sought a direction to appoint a high-powered monitoring committee until a fresh body is formally constituted to oversee the re-examination. It further said the committee should comprise a retired Supreme Court judge as the chair, along with a cybersecurity expert and a forensic scientist, to ensure that no further leaks occur. The undergraduate-level National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) held on May 3 by the NTA for admissions to medical education programmes was cancelled on May 12 amid allegations of paper leak, which are now being probed by the CBI. (Agencies)

Petrol, diesel...

February following US-Israeli strikes on Iran and disruptions to shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, a key global oil transit route.

State-run retailers had delayed passage on higher input costs for weeks, a move the government said was intended to shield consumers from inflation.

Opposition parties, however, accused the administration of holding back price increases until after key state elections. The May 15 increase came after the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) expanded its electoral footprint by winning three of five state and UT elections, including West Bengal.

Since the start of the war, domestic cooking gas LPG prices have been raised by Rs 60 per 14.2-kg cylinder and that of compressed natural gas (CNG) by Rs 4 per kg since mid-May.

Despite the price increases, auto fuels petrol and diesel, and domestic cooking gas LPG continue to be sold at a substantial loss. Besides the three fuels, state-owned fuel retailers - Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) - have passed the

increase in jet fuel (ATF) rates. The three firms together control 90 per cent of India's fuel market.

Sujata Sharma, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, said the losses were close to Rs 600 crore per day, down from Rs 1,000 crore before May 15. She, however, did not explain why losses on LPG, which are supposed to be made good by the government by way of subsidy, are being counted to justify the price increases.

In Mumbai, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman defended the price hike, saying it was a market-driven revision by oil marketing companies in response to soaring global crude prices. The government, she said, had done its bid by foregoing more than Rs 1 lakh crore annually in tax revenues through Rs 10 a litre excise duty cuts on petrol and diesel to shield consumers from fuel inflation triggered by the West Asia conflict.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the latest fuel hike, accusing the government of burdening consumers after state elections ended.

"Petrol and diesel prices are being increased in instalments so that people's pockets are quietly picked," Gandhi said in a post on social media, calling Modi "Mahaling Manay Modi" - a play on words linking the prime minister to inflation.

Congress president Kharge alleged that the Modi government has looted Rs 45 lakh crore in the last 12 years after petrol prices were hiked from Rs 71.41 per litre in 2014 to Rs 102.12 per litre in 2026, and diesel prices from Rs 56.71 per litre to Rs 95.20 per litre. Retail fuel prices were first raised by Rs 3 per litre on May 15, followed by a 90-paise increase on May 19 and another hike on May 23, when petrol prices rose by 87 paise and diesel by 91 paise per litre.

Prices vary across states due to local levies. After Monday's increase, petrol in Mumbai was priced at Rs 111.21 per litre and diesel at Rs 97.83, while Kolkata rates rose to Rs 113.51 and Rs 99.82, respectively. In Chennai, petrol costs Rs 107.77 and diesel Rs 99.55 per litre.

Private fuel retailers also moved prices higher alongside state-owned firms. Nayara Energy had earlier increased petrol and diesel prices by Rs 5 and Rs 3 per litre, respectively, in March, while Shell plc raised petrol prices by Rs 7.41 and diesel by as much as Rs 25 per litre from April 1.

Jio-bp, the fuel retailing joint venture between Reliance Industries Ltd and BP PLC, adjusted pump prices in line with state-run retailers.

The back-to-back increases are expected to add to inflationary pressures and raise transportation and logistics costs across the economy.

India's retail inflation accelerated to 3.48 per cent in April from 3.40 per cent in March, while wholesale inflation climbed to a 42-month high of 8.3 per cent, driven largely by higher fuel and energy costs. The fuel price increases come amid broader efforts by the government to contain India's oil import bill and reduce fuel consumption.

Prime Minister Modi last week urged citizens and government departments to conserve fuel, encourage remote working and reduce non-essential travel as elevated energy prices pressure foreign exchange reserves and threaten to widen the current account deficit.

Several state governments have already directed departments to curb travel and reduce office attendance. Industry officials said the latest revisions appeared calibrated to partially ease pressure on oil companies without triggering a sharp inflation shock, though they acknowledged the increases would add to price pressures. Prashant Vasishth, Senior Vice President and Co-Group Head, Corporate Ratings, ICRA Ltd, said, "Despite the latest hike in retail prices of auto fuels, oil marketing companies' under-recoveries remain stubbornly high due to increasing losses in domestic LPG sales and a high premium to the crude marker."

ICRA estimated that the crude price at USD 120-125 per barrel, and considering the past 10-year average crack spreads of auto fuels, oil marketing companies are incurring a loss of about Rs 700-800 crore daily on the sale of auto fuels and domestic LPG even after factoring in the fuel price hike. "This high level of under-recoveries is unsustainable."

NIA conducts...

Jel, declared an unlawful association under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. The investigations so far have revealed that Jel was actively involved in collecting terror funds and fuelling terrorism in the Valley and other parts of India.

"It was engaged in collecting funds domestically and internationally in the name of donations for charity and welfare activities, such as health and education.

"It was diverting such funds towards violent and secessionist activities, and also channelling them to proscribed terrorist organisations such as the Hizbul-Mujahideen (HM) and others through well-organised networks of cadres," an NIA statement said.

The Jel terror conspiracy also involved radicalisation and recruitment of impressionable Kashmiri youth as new members (Rukuns) for carrying out secessionist activities, it said.

The NIA is continuing with its investigation into the case in a bid to end the outfit's secessionist activities and dismantle the terror network operating in J-K, the statement said.

Over 300...

The situation. "All cabins are intact and rescue operations to safely evacuate stranded tourists are underway with trained teams on the ground. The situation is completely under control and there is no cause for panic," the chief minister said in a post on X.

On the instructions of the chief minister, Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary, accompanied by

local MLA Farooq Ahmed Shah and senior administrative officials, visited the tourist resort to oversee the ground coordination.

Officials said that since several cabins were hanging at a height of 500 ft, technical extraction protocols took considerable time.

By late afternoon, 179 tourists had been brought down, with the remaining passengers safely evacuated in subsequent phases as teams cleared the cabins one by one.

Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha said he had directed DGP Nalin Prabhat to proceed to Gulmarg to oversee the rescue operation.

"I'm monitoring the rescue operation for tourists stranded in cable car cabins following a technical fault in Gulmarg. I have directed the DGP to proceed to the site. Joint rescue teams of Police, Army and SDRF along with DC and SSP are conducting the operation to ensure the safety of all tourists," Sinha posted on X.

The Army said in a post on X that swift and coordinated rescue efforts were launched with the assistance of the Chinook Corps.

The Gulmarg Gondola, one of the highest cable cars in Asia, has experienced technical halts in the past, including a temporary suspension in January last year. A major tragedy occurred on June 25, 2017, when an unpropped tree struck a cabin during high winds, leading to a crash that claimed seven lives.

Monday's incident comes a day after a 16-year-old boy died in Agra after a zipline cable snapped at an amusement facility here, causing him to fall nearly 45 ft.

Court...

court premises on April 28, 2026, when the complainant, Ahrar Baig, an intern at the J&K High Court, claimed that the accused followed him through the court corridor, abused him and allegedly delivered a violent headbutt near the District Judge's Library, causing injuries. As per the police report, the complainant received three stitches on his lip and was referred for dental consultation, while CCTV footage of the incident was also seized during investigation.

The applicant, through counsel Mr. A.H. Kazmi and Mr. Gaurav Arora, argued that he was innocent, had himself been assaulted by the complainant's side, and had been falsely implicated. It was submitted that he is a senior citizen, physically handicapped since childhood, and was ready to cooperate with the investigation and abide by any condition imposed by the court.

Opposing the plea, the prosecution and complainant's counsel argued that the accused had assaulted a young intern within the court premises, creating fear among litigants and junior lawyers. It was further alleged that the accused and his family members were pressuring the complainant to withdraw the FIR, and that custodial interrogation was required, particularly as the allegation regarding snatching of the complainant's chain was still under investigation.

After hearing both sides and perusing the case diary, the court observed that the investigation had prima facie established the applicant's involvement in the alleged occurrence. The court noted that although most offences mentioned in the FIR were bailable, the investigation regarding Section 307 BNS had not been dropped and the allegations of chain snatching were still being verified through CCTV footage and witness statements. The court further held that there was a likelihood of hampering and influencing prosecution evidence, which is a relevant ground for refusing anticipatory bail. Observing that no case was made out for extending the extraordinary remedy of anticipatory bail, the court rejected the plea and dismissed the application. (JNF)

LG Saxena...

Prime Minister, Narendra Modi's dictum of "Ease of Doing Business" and "Minimum Government, Maximum Governance", this initiative will also enhance transparency, efficiency and accountability, while accelerating economic growth, enterprise development and investment promotion in Ladakh.

As part of the current rollout, 13 departments have been incorporated with the portal, with 23 online services already made live. The Administration aims to progressively expand the platform by onboarding additional departments and services in a phased manner. The portal provides access to online services from departments, including Tourism, Public Health Engineering, Industries and Commerce, along with information regarding schemes, incentives, policies, Acts, Rules, Notifications and procedures of the UT Administration.

Key features of the portal include a Common Application Form (CAF), Single Sign-On access, PAN authentication, SMS and e-mail notifications, live application tracking, integrated payment gateway, grievance redressal mechanism and workflow-based approvals. Applicants can also monitor approval timelines, pendency and grievance status through an interactive dashboard.

"The Ease of Doing Business Portal marks a major milestone in Ladakh's journey towards digital government and administrative reforms. By integrating services of multiple departments onto a single transparent and technology-driven platform, we are ensuring faster approvals, reducing procedural delays and creating a more business-friendly environment in Ladakh. This initiative will strengthen investor confidence, promote entrepreneurship and contribute towards economic growth and employment generation in the Union Territory," LG, Saxena said. The key features of the EoDB Portal include the following:

- Common Application Form (CAF): Applicants can submit core information once, enabling reuse across multiple departmental applications and reducing repetitive documentation.
- SMS & e-Mail Authentication and notifications: A unified service platform with Single Sign-on to access multiple services with SMS and e-Mail notifications at every stage of application processes.
- PAN Authentication: Real-time identity verification

integrated with CBDT databases for seamless applicant authentication.

- Unified Digital Services Framework: A centralised digital interface for availing approvals, registrations, clearances, renewals, and certificates from multiple departments through a single platform.

Integrated Payment Architecture: Provision has been made for seamless online payment integration for departmental services through a unified digital payment mechanism.

- Grievance Redressal Mechanism: An in-built digital grievance module enabling applicants to raise concerns, monitor status, and facilitate timely resolution of issues.

- Interactive Dashboard & Application Tracking: Applicants can monitor application status, approval stages, timelines, pendency, service history, and grievance resolution through a real-time interactive dashboard.

- Timeline-Based Approvals: The platform supports digitally monitored service timelines aimed at improving efficiency, ensuring timely disposal of applications, and reducing procedural delays.

- Transparent Approval Mechanism: The system enables transparent processing of applications with clearly defined workflows, digital movement of files, and real-time status visibility for applicants.

- Auto Appeal System: The portal incorporates automated escalation and appeal mechanisms to facilitate the timely resolution of pending applications and grievances.

- Delay Accountability Framework: The system enables monitoring of delays and pendency at various stages, thereby strengthening institutional accountability and service delivery efficiency.

- Cross-Departmental Service Delivery: The portal facilitates integrated access to multiple departmental services through a common governance framework.

CM Omar...

recruitment process and the circumstances under which the beneficiaries had become eligible for compassionate appointment, the Chief Minister said that unlike regular aspirants who secure jobs through examinations and interviews, the appointees under these schemes have endured profound personal tragedies. "To get a government job, we usually ask our children to pass examinations and interviews. But the test you have faced has been far more difficult because you had to lose someone dear to you to reach this stage. That is why I say we are not distributing these orders as a favour, but rather repaying a moral obligation," he added. The Chief Minister observed that the government functions as one collective family and emphasized the importance of standing together in times of grief and hardship.

"We want this government and all of us working within it, whether in the Secretariat or outside, to function as one larger family. We must not only share each other's pain but also support one another during difficult circumstances. This initiative is a small step in that direction so that your families can move forward and not suffer any further hardship," he said.

Further the appointees to discharge their duties with sincerity and dedication, the Chief Minister said public service should always remain centred on helping people and contributing positively to society. "Our only expectation from you is that wherever you are posted, you serve the people of Jammu and Kashmir with honesty, commitment and dedication. Whatever role we hold in government, our purpose remains the same—that when we return home in the evening, we should feel satisfied that our day's work has benefited someone. If you perform your duties honestly, that itself will be the greatest tribute to those whose memories brought you here today," he said.

The Chief Minister also reiterated the government's resolve to ensure that eligible beneficiaries are not made to run from office to office for compassionate appointments.

"We are committed to ensuring that you do not have to move from pillar to post to obtain your appointment orders. That would be a grave injustice to all of you. We will ensure that the process is expedited and all remaining cases are cleared at the earliest," he assured.

The beneficiaries expressed gratitude to the Chief Minister and the administration for facilitating timely appointments and extending support to families during difficult times.

Govt grants...

holidays from two days to three. Credit goes to CM Omar Abdullah SB for this," NC spokesman Imran Nabi Dar posted on X.

"God forbid, if BJP had come to power here also, people would have to rush to their offices with their qurbani baskets in their hands," he added.

Forest fire...

video circulating on social media showed vast stretches of forest engulfed in flames, while the distress calls of hundreds of birds, including peacocks, could be heard in the background. The footage prompted widespread concern among residents and environmentalists, who urged authorities to intensify efforts to save wildlife and douse the flames at the earliest.

Officials informed that firefighting teams were working tirelessly in the difficult terrain to bring the blaze under control and safeguard the ecologically sensitive area. The fire has destroyed large areas of plantation and other forest wealth, causing significant ecological damage, officials said, adding that no loss of human life or injury has been reported so far. The exact cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained.

CBI arrests...

The CBI laid a trap on 24.05.2026 and caught the accused for receiving the bribe amount from the complainant through QR code. Subsequently, the accused Junior Assistant was arrested on Monday.

DC Kathua reviews progress of Self Enumeration & NMJKA

Stresses wider public outreach, proper documentation of activities

KATHUA, MAY 25: Deputy Commissioner Kathua Rajesh Sharma today chaired a meeting of the district officers to review the progress achieved under the ongoing Self Enumeration initiative of Census 2027 and the Nasha Mukta Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan (NMJKA). The Deputy Commissioner took a detailed appraisal of the measures being undertaken to promote Self Enumeration. He directed officers to intensify public awareness and outreach efforts to encourage citizens to avail the digital facility from the comfort of their homes. Emphasising the importance of citizen participation, the DC stressed the need for extensive sensitisation campaigns highlighting the ease, convenience and benefits of Self Enumeration. He directed all departments to actively publicise the initiative through awareness camps, public interactions and social media platforms. The officers



were further asked to involve elected representatives, community leaders, prominent citizens, educational institutions and other stakeholders in motivating the public to adopt the digital mode of self-enumeration. The DC underscored the importance of establishing facilitation and awareness camps at prominent locations to assist citizens in completing the self-enumeration

process and resolving any queries related to the initiative. He called upon all departments to work in a coordinated manner to maximise public participation and ensure wider dissemination of information regarding the ongoing exercise. Reviewing the implementation of the Nasha Mukta Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan, the DC directed all district and sectoral officers to

ensure regular conduct of awareness, outreach and community engagement activities under the campaign. He stressed that every activity undertaken by departments must be properly documented and uploaded on the designated NMJKA portal for accurate representation of the district's efforts and achievements. The Deputy Commissioner emphasised that timely and quality reporting is essential for effective monitoring of the campaign. He instructed officers to ensure that events are conducted in a meaningful manner, supported by proper photographic documentation, attendance records and activity reports besides ensuring events uploading on prescribed e-portal. He further directed that daily reports of all NMJKA-related activities should invariably reach the DC Office in the prescribed format for consolidation and review.

Training Programme on IPMS Portal organised at Directorate of Agriculture



JAMMU, MAY 25: A training-cum-awareness programme regarding the roll-out of the Integrated Pesticide Management System (IPMS) Portal in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir was organised today at the Conference Hall Directorate of Agriculture, Jammu. The programme witnessed participation from across the Jammu region. The training pro-

gramme was organised by the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Government of India-Krishhi Bhavan- New Delhi. Experts delivered a detailed presentation and live demonstration of the IPMS Portal and its stock management modules. The session focused on the operational aspects of the portal including product uploading, stock maintenance, inventory management and digital compli-

ance procedures aimed at ensuring greater transparency and efficiency in pesticide regulation and monitoring. The distributors actively interacted with the organisers through video conferencing. A healthy and constructive discussion was held wherein the participants raised several queries and sought clarifications regarding the implementation and functioning of the portal. The organisers addressed the concerns comprehensively and provided necessary guidance for smooth on-boarding and effective utilisation of the IPMS system. Speaking on the occasion, Plant Protection Officer Raju Mahajan urged all pesticide distributors to complete the requisite portal-related formalities.

Orientation Programme on Solid Waste Management Rules 2026 held at Samba



SAMBA, MAY 25: A Workshop cum Orientation Programme on Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules 2026 was conducted today in the Conference Hall of the District Administrative Complex Samba. The workshop was attended by Block Development Officers of the District, Panchayat Secretaries and other officials of the Rural Development Department.

The programme was organised in compliance with the directions of the Supreme Court of India regarding the implementation of the Solid Waste Management Rules 2026. The workshop was chaired by the Additional District Commissioner. Assistant Commissioner Panchayat presented a detailed review of the Solid Waste Management

Rules 2026 through a PowerPoint presentation and highlighted the key provisions, responsibilities and implementation framework envisaged under the Rules. The programme aimed to enhance awareness and understanding of the provisions of the SWM Rules 2026 and to ensure their effective implementation at the grassroots level across the district.

GIS-Based Master Plan for Planned Development of Doda Township in offing

MLA Mehraj Malik, DC review proposed interventions, formulation process

DODA, MAY 25: Member Legislative Assembly (AC 52-Doda), Mehraj Din Malik along with District Development Commissioner Krishan Lal, today presided over a comprehensive meeting regarding the preparation and implementation of the GIS-based Master Plan for Doda Town. At the outset, the DC provided a detailed overview of the proposed master plan and highlighted the importance of scientific and technology-driven urban planning for the sustainable development of the district.



The meeting was attended by officers from across the line departments, including Town Planning, Revenue, PWD, Rural Development, Forest, Health, Education, Fire and Emergency Services, MVD, Traffic Department, Food and Civil Supplies, Municipal authorities, Statistics and Evaluation Office besides other concerned agencies. Detailed deliberations were held on the use of Geographic Information System (GIS) technol-

ogy for planned development, land use mapping, road connectivity, disaster management, environmental conservation, infrastructure development and regulation of construction activities in urban as well as rural areas of the district. The DDC stressed the need for inter-departmental coordination and directed all departments to provide updated records, maps and field data for the timely preparation of an accurate and people-cent-

ric master plan. Planner Shivani Garg from Guru Nanak Dev University delivered a detailed PowerPoint presentation on the proposed GIS-based Master Plan for Doda town. The presentation covered important aspects related to zoning, traffic management, public utility spaces, drainage systems, green zones, tourism potential, beautification projects and future infrastructure requirements for the town.

Stakeholders also participated virtually and shared valuable suggestions for making the master plan more practical, sustainable and development-oriented. The DDC emphasized that the GIS-based planning system would ensure transparency in decision-making, better resource management, systematic urban expansion and improved civic amenities for the public. The participating departments shared their valuable suggestions and sector-specific inputs for the formulation of a comprehensive and well-developed master plan. Officers highlighted the need for proper zoning, expansion of road networks, preservation of environmentally sensitive areas, strengthening of drainage systems, development of public amenities, protection of agricultural land and creation of sustainable urban infrastructure. The departments also emphasized coordinated planning to meet future population growth and developmental requirements of the district.

ADC Poonch inspects Eidgah, Sheep Sale Point; Reviews Eid-ul-Azha arrangements

POONCH, MAY 25: Additional Deputy Commissioner Poonch Tahir Mustafa Malik today conducted an extensive visit to the Eidgah and Sheep Sale Point at College Ground to review and inspect the arrangements being put in place for the smooth and peaceful conduct of Eid-ul-Azha. The ADC was accompanied by Executive Engineer Jal Shakti, Executive Engineer JPDCI, Deputy District Election Officer, officials from the Municipal Committee, Floriculture Department and Veterinary Surgeons and field staff from the Sheep Husbandry Department. After inspecting the overall arrangements at the Eidgah, the Additional Deputy Commissioner directed the concerned departments to maintain the civic facilities properly for the convenience of the public during Eid prayers. He instructed the Executive Engineer Jal Shakti and Executive



Engineer JPDCI to ensure uninterrupted water and electricity supply, emphasizing that there should be no shortage of essential services

during the festive occasion. The ADC also directed the Municipal Authorities to maintain sanitation and cleanliness at the Eidgah premises and around mosques to facilitate a hygienic environment for devotees. The Floriculture Department was instructed to make necessary beautification arrangements in and around the Eidgah. Later, the ADC visited the designated Sheep Sale Point established at College Ground for sale of sacrificial animals. He took stock of the facilities available there and asked the Sheep Husbandry Department to ensure proper medical examination and health check-up of sacrificial animals to prevent sale of diseased animals in the market.

DHSJ conducts surprise inspection of healthcare facilities

JAMMU, MAY 25: Director Health Services Jammu (DHSJ) Dr. Poonam Sethi conducted a surprise visit to Sub-District Hospital- Kot Bhalwal, Community Health Centre- Sohanjana and Ayushman Arogya Mandhir (AAM)- Surechak to review the functioning of the institution and assess the quality of healthcare services being provided to the public.



During the visit, the Director inspected various sections of each hospital including the Outpatient Department (OPD), Emergency Wing, Labour Room, Pharmacy and Laboratory. She interacted with the medical and paramedical staff and took

feedback from patients regarding the facilities and services available at the hospital. She laid special emphasis on the functioning of Emergency Rooms (ER Rooms) with Cleanliness, availability of emergency drugs and life-saving medicines to ensure prompt management of patients during emergencies. She also reviewed implementation of the ongoing National Health

Programmes like AB-PMJAY, JSSK and JSY. The Director Health Services stressed on quality patient care, proper maintenance of records, sanitation and cleanliness, punctuality and patient-friendly behavior. She assured that all necessary support shall be extended by the Directorate to strengthen health infrastructure and manpower at these Health Institutions.

SCERT J&K Jammu organises Capacity-Building Programmes on DIKSHA, ECCE/FLN

JAMMU, MAY 25: The State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) J&K Divisional Office Jammu organized two major programmes simultaneously aimed at strengthening digital education and Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE) initiatives across Jammu Division. The events were held under the mentorship of Dr. Naseem Javid Chowdhary, Director SCERT J&K, and the able guidance of Prof. (Dr.) Sindhu Kapoor, Joint Director, SCERT J&K Divisional Office Jammu. A 3-Day Workshop on "DIKSHA Platform: Creation, Curation and



Effective Utilization of Digital Content" was organized by the Department of ECT & CS and DIKSHA Team, SCERT Jammu. The workshop witnessed participation of 30 District DIKSHA Coordinators comprising one Academic and two Technical Coordinators from each district of Jammu Division.

The participants underwent intensive hands-on training on various advanced features of DIKSHA 2.0. AI-enabled tools such as Ask DIKSHA, Video Keyword Search, Read Aloud and Translation Tools, Personalized Adaptive Learning (PAL), Coupon-Based Courses.

DC Samba reviews progress under PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana

SAMBA, MAY 25: A meeting to review the progress of PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana was held today at the Office of the Deputy Commissioner Samba. Deputy Commissioner Ayushi Sudan chaired the meeting attended by senior functionaries from JPDCL, representatives from other departments, bank officials and empanelled vendors. The meeting conducted a detailed review of the progress achieved by ED Vijaypur under the scheme. It was informed that a total of 3,119



applications have been received in Samba district, out of which 2,555 consumers have selected vendors, while 1,069 rooftop solar installations have been completed and 1,039 cases have been commissioned

(inspection approved). Subsidy has been disbursed in 952 cases. Sub-division-wise progress, pending inspections, vendor performance and consumer awareness activities were also reviewed. The

Deputy Commissioner directed JPDCL to expedite pending inspections, increase the conversion of vendor-selected applications into installations and intensify IEC activities to motivate more consumers to opt for

rooftop solar systems under the scheme. The Deputy Commissioner directed the concerned officers to ensure close coordination with vendors, timely execution of installations and release of subsidies. Emphasis was also laid on conducting awareness camps and targeting high electricity consumption households for coverage under the scheme. The meeting concluded with directions for weekly monitoring and focused efforts to achieve the set targets.

Land acquired, compensation in Deptt accounts; but farmers get nothing: Tony

Jammu, May 25: A strong protest was held at Devi Ghar Bhola Chak in Suchetgarh under the leadership of senior Congress leader and former DDC Suchetgarh Taranjit Singh Tony, demanding immediate release of compensation and ownership rights for border farmers whose land has been acquired by the BSF.

The protest witnessed participation from affected farmers, local residents, Panchayat members and prominent border representatives including Sarpanch Sarabjit Singh, Sarpanch Vijay Choudhary, Sarpanch Balbir Kaur and several panches, who raised slogans against the alleged harassment and neglect of border cultivators by the administration.

Addressing the gathering, Taranjit Singh Tony said that the BSF had acquired land belonging to four families in the area and compensation had already been released by the concerned security agencies, but the local administration has failed to transfer the amount to the actual cultivators who have been



farming the land for nearly 60 years.

"These poor border farmers have protected and cultivated this land for generations under extremely difficult circumstances. Today, when compensation is being released, the administration is denying them their rightful dues despite acknowledging their cultivation through official demarcation," Tony said.

He stated that during a recent demarcation exercise, the Tehsildar himself reportedly confirmed nearly 66 years of continuous cultivation by the affected

farmers. Tony questioned how the administration could ignore such long possession and cultivation history while withholding compensation.

"Whenever the Army acquires land during wartime situations or for security purposes, compensation and even mining-related compensation is traditionally paid to the actual cultivators because they are dependent on the land for survival. Why is a different policy being adopted in this case?" he asked.

Tony alleged that instead of supporting border residents, the

administration is pushing them from one department to another, creating fear and uncertainty among farming families living close to the International Border.

"The compensation amount is moving from department to department and even towards the custodian department, while the actual farmers are left helpless. If this injustice continues, where will these people go? These border residents have already sacrificed enough for the nation," he said.

The Congress leader warned that a "dangerous precedent" is being created by denying compensation to those who have tilled the land for decades. He said border farmers now fear that if security forces take possession of more land in future, they may lose both livelihood and legal protection.

"There is anger and panic among border farmers. People are worried that tomorrow more land may be taken and they will neither receive compensation nor ownership rights despite cultivating the land for generations," Tony remarked.

'Nivesh Bus Yatra' by Canara Robeco AMC reaches Jammu to educate Investors



Jammu, 25 May 2026: Canara Robeco Asset Management Company Limited (Investment Manager to Canara Robeco Mutual Fund), India's second-oldest Mutual Fund, has launched the 'Nivesh Bus Yatra' in Jammu to create awareness about mutual fund investment and educate investors across the state. The initiative aims to simplify mutual fund investing and encourage financial literacy across the state. The bus has begun its journey in Jammu, followed by Rajouri, Poonch, Udhampur and Kathua, reaching key locations, engaging residents across the city.

"In today's evolving financial landscape, knowledge is as powerful as understanding. An informed investor not only makes better decisions for themselves but also contributes to a stronger financial ecosystem. We are committed to making invest-

ment knowledge simple, accessible and actionable," said Rajnish Narula, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Canara Robeco AMC.

"The Nivesh Bus Yatra aims to bring financial education directly to communities. Having already reached states like Kerala, Punjab, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Assam, Maharashtra, Goa and Himachal Pradesh, we are now taking it to Jammu to engage with residents in across multiple cities, simplify investing concepts, dispel common myths, and promote long-term financial planning."

The Nivesh Bus Yatra will interact with residents at the prominent community locations, providing easy-to-understand insights about investments.

Ramban Administration conducts Jan Sunwai Camps at Dedha, Narthyal

RAMBAN, MAY 25: District Administration Ramban, under the guidance of Deputy Commissioner Ramban Mohammad Alyas Khan, organised Jan Sunwai (Public Grievance Redressal Camps) at Upper Dedha of Panchayat Dedha and village Narthyal of Panchayat Balihote-B as part of the 'Jan Bhagidari-Sabse Door Sabse Pehle Abhiyan' under PM JANMAN and DA-JGUA campaign. At Upper Dedha, officers and officials facilitated on-the-spot delivery of public services besides spreading awareness regarding the welfare and developmental schemes of the Government. During the proceedings, local residents projected several issues and developmental demands related to drinking water supply, electricity, road connectivity, healthcare, education and other basic amenities. The grievances and representations submitted by the public were patiently heard by the concerned officers and duly registered for timely and systematic redressal. Several grievances were resolved on the spot through coordi-

nated efforts of the departments concerned, while clear directions along with timelines were issued for disposal of the remaining issues. The camp served as an effective platform for strengthening public outreach and ensuring responsive governance at the grassroots level. Meanwhile, a similar outreach camp was organised at Narthyal of Panchayat Balihote-B, focusing on on-the-spot facilitation of services to the local tribal population under PM-JANMAN and DA-JGUA initiatives. Officers from government departments interacted with the locals, noted their grievances and initiated necessary action for redressal of issues raised by them. The residents at both locations appreciated the District Administration for organising the outreach camps in far-flung areas and ensuring doorstep delivery of government services and welfare schemes. They expressed hope that the grievances requiring further intervention would be taken up with the higher authorities for early resolution.

FIR Against Peaceful Protestors Is Vendetta Against the Displaced Community: GL Raina

Jammu, 25 May 2026: Girdhari Lal Raina, former MLC and spokesperson of BJP JKUF, has strongly condemned the registration of an FIR against peaceful protestors belonging to the displaced Kashmiri Hindu community. He described the action as "deeply unfortunate, insensitive, and vindictive," particularly because several individuals who were never present at the protest site have reportedly been included among the accused. "This is nothing short of vendetta against a community that has already suffered decades of displacement, neglect, and institutional apathy," Raina stated. The former MLC asserted that the debate surrounding national integration under the National Food Security Act

(NFSA) in relation to the displaced Kashmiri Hindu community is not merely about food grains or administrative procedure. At its core, he said, the issue concerns identity, dignity, constitutional protection, and the unresolved status of a community that continues to live in exile decades after displacement. "What appears to the administration as a routine welfare transition is experienced by the community as yet another step toward institutional invisibilization," he added. GL Raina emphasized that the displaced community does not oppose food security. "What the community resists is the gradual dilution of its legal and historical identity as a people who suffered targeted displacement, ethnic cleansing, loss of homeland, and prolonged exile," he

said. He further observed that the apprehension within the community is both genuine and historically rooted. "Once absorbed into generic welfare structures as 'normal beneficiaries', there is a growing fear that the State may slowly absorb itself of its larger constitutional and moral obligations relating to rehabilitation, restitution, and recognition," he stated. Raina noted that this fear has emerged from a long history of administrative neglect experienced by the displaced community under successive governments. "The NFSA controversy exposes a deeper structural problem - the absence of a dedicated institutional mechanism capable of understanding the unique humanitarian and constitutional position of internally displaced Kashmiri Hindus.

Consequently, every issue becomes adversarial. Authorities interpret matters narrowly through procedure, while the community invokes broader principles of constitutional justice, human dignity, and historical accountability," he said. Demanding immediate corrective measures, GL Raina called for the withdrawal of the FIR registered against peaceful protestors and urged the administration to suspend the NFSA integration process until adequate and acceptable safeguards are evolved in consultation with representatives of the displaced community. "Democratic protest cannot be criminalized, especially when it concerns a displaced community struggling to preserve its identity and constitutional safeguards," he added.

MLA Dr Narinder Singh Raina felicitates meritorious students at RS Pura School

School achieves 66 distinctions; MLA Raina lauds students, teachers and parents for excellence and legacy

RS Pura, May 25: Martyr Major Arvind Bazala Boys Higher Secondary School, RS Pura, organised a grand "Meritorious Students Felicitation Ceremony" to honour students who excelled in academics, sports and co-curricular activities, reflecting the institution's continued commitment towards excellence in education and overall personality development.

MLA RS Pura-Jammu South, Dr. Narinder Singh Raina, attended the programme as the Chief Guest in the presence of members of the School Management Committee (SMDC), parents, prominent citizens and well-wishers. The parents of Martyr Major Arvind Bazala also graced the occasion and



appreciated the efforts being made by the institution in imparting quality education and promoting holistic development among students. During the programme, Senior Lecturer Sh. Rahul Dev Raina, under the guidance of Principal

Smt. Rachna Tomar, presented the annual report of the school and highlighted the major achievements registered during the academic session. He informed that students of the institution secured an impressive 66 distinctions in the recently declared Board examina-

tions, bringing laurels to the school. The report also highlighted the institution's achievements in sports, cultural activities, infrastructural development and several innovative educational initiatives undertaken for the benefit of students.

The efforts of the staff in maintaining high academic standards and encouraging extracurricular participation were widely appreciated. On the occasion, Dr. Narinder Singh Raina and SMDC members felicitated the school toppers with mementos and certificates. Distinction holders, sports achievers and students who excelled in other activities were also honoured with appreciation certificates in recognition of their dedication and hard work.

Mahant Gopala Nand felicitates Bharat Priye for religious, social contributions

Jammu, May 25: In recognition of his dedicated contribution towards religious and social welfare activities, Mahant Bharat Priye, Chairman of JKPCSS Kissan Congress, was felicitated today by Mahant Gopala Nand at Shiv Temple, Patli Moth. The felicitation ceremony witnessed the participation of several prominent social and religious personalities who lauded Bharat Priye for his sincere efforts in promoting social harmony, spiritual values and youth-oriented initiatives in society. Speaking on the occasion, Mahant Gopala Nand appreciated Bharat Priye's active involvement in various religious and public welfare programmes that



have positively influenced young people in a constructive direction. "Sports and social awareness activities play a vital role in keeping youth away from social evils and motivating them to contribute positively towards nation-building," he said. Mahant Gopala Nand further observed that religious institutions and social organisations must work collectively to inculcate values of service.

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Omar Abdullah Govt Choked Corruption Channels active during BJP era in J&K: Rattan Lal Gupta

Says BJP LOP has vanished from his own Padder constituency.

Jammu, May 25: Launching a blistering attack on the BJP, Jammu and Kashmir National Conference Provincial President Jammu, Rattan Lal Gupta, on Monday said the BJP leadership is rattled and politically frustrated because the Omar Abdullah-led government has restored transparency, accountability, and public scrutiny in governance, effectively choking the channels of corruption that flourished during BJP's direct rule in Jammu and Kashmir.

Responding to what he termed the BJP's "bogus propaganda campaign," Gupta said the party is in



deep distress as its entrenched networks of patronage and profiteering have collapsed under an elected government committed to clean administration. "They are suffering like fish without water because their sources have

dried up. The frustration within the BJP is palpable," he said. Gupta asserted that every penny spent by the present government is now subjected to legislative oversight and public accountability, unlike during BJP's rule, when decisions and budgets were cleared in New Delhi, by bypassing democratic institutions. "During BJP's direct rule, budgets were sanctioned behind closed doors while their local leaders amassed enormous wealth. Today, that unchecked loot has stopped. The Omar government has shut down their shops of corruption," he said.

RGIRC, IAP Jammu, SMGS Hospital organise Oncology CME on Pediatric Cancer Care

JAMMU, May 25: Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute and Research Centre (RGIRC), in association with the Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP), Jammu Branch, and the Department of Pediatrics, SMGS Hospital Jammu, organised a focused Oncology Continuing Medical Education (CME) programme on Friday to enhance awareness regarding early diagnosis and referral of pediatric cancers. The academic programme brought together pediatricians, clinicians and healthcare professionals for interactive scientific sessions aimed at strengthening diagnostic vigilance



and improving oncology care pathways for children. The CME focused on the importance of early detection of childhood malignancies, timely referral to specialised oncology centres and accurate interpretation of routine clinical findings in everyday pediatric practice. Expert faculty members from RGIRC shared practical and case-

based insights to help bridge the gap between primary clinical evaluation and specialised cancer care. The first scientific session was delivered by Dr. Anjali Pahuja, Senior Consultant, Radiation Oncology at RGIRC, on the topic "Malignancy or Mimi? When to Refer...". She highlighted the importance

Hematology Oncology and Bone Marrow Transplant at RGIRC, on "Decoding the CBC in Office Practice." Her presentation focused on practical interpretation of Complete Blood Count (CBC) reports during routine pediatric consultations. Dr. Malhotra explained how subtle abnormalities in CBC parameters can often serve as early indicators of underlying hematological malignancies in children. She also discussed common CBC variations in children and the importance of correlating laboratory findings with clinical evaluation for timely diagnosis.

5-Day Training & Sensitization Programme on Soil Health Management and Exotic Crop Cultivation Inaugurated at Industrial Biotech Park

KATHUA 25 MAY : Driving the vision of innovation-led agriculture and rural empowerment, a 5-Day Training and Sensitization Programme on "Soil Health Management and Exotic Crop Cultivation" officially commenced at the Industrial Biotech Park, Gathi, Kathua. The high-impact initiative is organized by Rapture Biotech, J&K, in active collaboration with the Jammu & Kashmir Science, Technology and Innovation Council (JKSTIC), Department of Science and Technology, J&K. The grand inaugural ceremony was graced by Mrs. Babila Rakwal, JKAS, Hon'ble Minister for Agriculture, Government, Science and Technology Department, J&K, who attended as the Chief Guest. The event also witnessed the valuable presence of Dr. Mushtaq Ahmed Bhat, Additional Director, JKSTIC, alongside Guest of Honour Mr. Vishal Mahajan, Chief Scientist and Head of Krishi Vigyan Kendra (VKV), Kathua.



Speaking at the inaugural session, Ms. Ambika Slatia, Director of Rapture Biotech Jammu, welcomed the dignitaries and highlighted that the core objective of this initiative is to introduce sustainable biotechnology tools and modern economic avenues to the region. She emphasized that aligning with the national vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat and Start-Up India championed by Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Hon'ble Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh, this program is specifically designed to transform local farmers into future-ready

agri-entrepreneurs. Additionally, Ms. Ambika Slatia, Director of Rapture Biotech Jammu briefed the gathering on the extensive technical curriculum of the 5-day schedule, which focuses directly on why exotic crops, aromatic plants, and medicinal plants are necessary for modern agriculture. She also highlighted how cultivating these high-value crops boosts local promotion, generates rural employment, and opens up lucrative import-export opportunities for J&K's farming community. Key coordinating officials present included Accounts Officer Ms.

Ishita Choudhary (JKSTIC) and Asst Director Ms. Shruti Khanna (JKSTIC). In her inaugural address, Chief Guest Mrs. Babila Rakwal emphasized the necessity of integrating science-driven solutions into farming to enhance soil vitality and boost rural economies. She actively interacted with local farmers and village Sarpanches, listening closely to their ground-level queries and promising continuous administrative support for skill development. A standout highlight of the session was the overwhelming and enthusiastic participation of women farmers from Jammu and Kathua. The presence, noting that women are leading the charge in biotechnology, sustainable farming, and rural entrepreneurship across the region. The event concluded with a profound vote of thanks acknowledging the collaborative efforts of JKSTIC and Rapture Biotech Jammu setting off a new movement of awareness.

MLA Randhawa Fulfills Long Pending Demand of Residents, Starts Rs.40 Lakh Lane & Drain Work

JAMMU MAY 25: Senior BJP Leader and MLA Babu Vikram Randhawa today fulfilled the long pending demand of local residents by inaugurating lane and drain construction work worth 740 lakhs in Sector-11, Ward No. 44, Nanak Nagar.



The developmental work was started in the presence of Mandal President Rahul Kumar and senior party leader Surjeet Singh along with team members Daljeet Singh, Bhushan Verma, Satvir Singh, Aman Goswami, Rajesh, Vishal Gupta, Nitish Nanda and Tejinder Singh. A large number of local residents and party workers gathered on the occasion and expressed gratitude to the MLA for addressing their genuine demand which had been pending for a long time. Officials from Jammu Municipal Corporation including JE Vishal Kotwal

and the concerned contractor were also present during the inauguration and assured timely completion of the work with proper quality standards. Speaking on the occasion, MLA Babu Ch. Vikram Randhawa said that development and public welfare remain his top priorities and every effort is being made to improve civic infrastructure across all wards of the constituency. He stated that proper lanes and drainage facilities are essential for better sanitation, connectivity and public convenience. He further said that he is

committed towards ensuring equal development in every area of the constituency and no genuine public issue will be ignored. He assured the residents that all pending developmental works and civic problems will continue to be addressed on priority basis. The local residents thanked the MLA for personally taking up the issue and initiating the much-needed development work, stating that the project will greatly benefit the people of the area and resolve long-standing problems. He further said that he is

Neeraj Kundan Graces Anti-Drug Cricket Tournament at Chack Majra, Bishnah; Dablehar Emerges Victorious

BISHNAH, MAY 25 : In a powerful initiative to combat drug abuse among youth, an Anti-Drug Cricket Tournament was successfully organized at Chack Majra, Bishnah. The tournament, which ran for 15 days, witnessed enthusiastic participation from more than 20 local teams and concluded with Team Dablehar lifting the championship trophy after a thrilling final. Neeraj Kundan, Congress District President Jammu Rural, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. He handed over the prize money and medals to the winning team from Dablehar and the runners-up, Team Raipur Satwari,

in a heartfelt ceremony that celebrated sportsmanship and community spirit. Addressing the gathering of young players and spectators, Neeraj Kundan delivered an inspiring speech emphasizing the dangers of drug addiction. He urged the youth to stay away from narcotics and channel their energy into sports and constructive activities. "Sports is the best way to keep our youth healthy, disciplined, and focused. We must unite to create a drug-free society," he said. Kundan also appreciated the efforts of the organizers, extending special congratulations to Parveen Choudhary and his dedi-

cated team for successfully conducting the tournament. He praised their commitment towards social causes and encouraged them to organize more such events in the future. The 15-day tournament not only promoted cricket but also served as a strong platform to spread awareness about the ill effects of drugs. Local residents and players appreciated the initiative, calling it a much-needed step in the right direction for the youth of the region. The event concluded on a positive note with participants pledging to stay drug-free and promote the message of health and fitness in their communities.

University of Jammu Inaugurates Two-Day MDP on Stress Management for Hospitality Sector

JAMMU, MAY 25: The P.G. Department of Commerce, University of Jammu inaugurated a two-day Management Development Programme (MDP) on the theme "Stress Management for Hospitality Sector" in collaboration with Anutham Hotel and Resorts today. The programme was organized under the patronage of Vice Chancellor, University of Jammu, Prof. Umesh Rai, reaffirming the University's commitment towards fostering entrepreneurship and industry-relevant skills among students and professionals. Department of Commerce, Prof. Jeevan Jyoti highlighted that the MDP aims to bridge the gap between academic learning and industry practices by equipping participants with essential tools for professional growth



and development. The programme witnessed enthusiastic participation from faculty members and hotel professionals. Ms. Lilly Bhan, Soft Skills Trainer and Management Head associated with Brainpreneurs-CDC, Ms. Pallavi Mahajan, HR and Marketing Program Manager

Media Marketing Head, Brainpreneurs-CDC, and Dr. Pallavi Sachdeva, Senior Assistant Professor, Department of Lifelong Learning, University of Jammu, were the keynote speakers during the inaugural session. The session commenced with the formal welcome of dignitaries and

participants. Keeping in view the present market scenario, the MDP emphasized the need to create awareness regarding workplace stress, emotional well-being, work-life balance, and effective coping strategies, particularly in the hospitality and service sectors. The resource persons highlighted the growing importance of stress management in enhancing employee productivity, organizational commitment, and mental wellness. Various aspects including self-awareness and stress assessment, management of anxiety and racing thoughts, building emotional resilience, self-compassion, mindfulness for stress reduction, emotional intelligence, and positive workplace culture were deliberated upon during the technical sessions. Interactive discussions.

Truth must prevail, allegations against officials must be probed fairly: Adv Devraj Sharma

Public distrust, allegations against IAS officers serious concern for governance

RS PURA, MAY 25: Senior BJP leader Adv Devraj Sharma has expressed serious concern over the ongoing protests against the SDM of RS Pura, stating that the matter must be dealt with in a transparent and impartial manner so that truth prevails and public confidence in the administration is safeguarded.

In a statement issued here today, Adv Devraj Sharma said that public allegations and counter allegations involving IAS officers or senior administrative officials should never be taken lightly, as such controversies directly impact the credibility of governance and public trust in institutions. He said every allegation must be



examined fairly and objectively, while ensuring that innocent officers are not unnecessarily targeted and those found guilty are brought to justice. "Whether an official is junior or senior, accountability must remain paramount. Respective

of status or position, anyone responsible for wrongdoing should face strict action under law," he asserted. The senior BJP leader observed that growing mistrust between the public and administrative institutions is not a healthy sign for democracy or good governance. He maintained that transparency, accountability, and responsiveness are essential for maintaining faith of the common people in the administration. Adv Sharma said that protests and public resentment often arise when people feel their grievances are not being addressed sincerely. Therefore, he urged the concerned authorities to thoroughly investigate the matter, ascertain facts, and

take appropriate action purely on the basis of evidence and fairness. He cautioned against politicising sensitive administrative issues and appealed to all stakeholders to maintain peace and restraint while allowing the due legal and administrative process to function independently. Stressing that justice must not only be done but should also be seen to be done, Adv Devraj Sharma said that restoring public confidence should remain the top priority of the administration. He added that good governance can thrive only when there is transparency, integrity, and mutual trust between the people and public institutions.

UNNAT NGO Educates Girls on HPV Vaccination as an Important Intervention for Cervical Cancer Control

Jammu-25-05-26: UNNAT NGO organized a Health Awareness Initiative on HPV Vaccination for Cervical Cancer Prevention at Government Higher Secondary School in Nowabad with the objective of spreading awareness among students, parents, and the community regarding the importance of timely HPV vaccination for adolescent girls. The session aimed to spread awareness about the importance of timely vaccination and its role in safeguarding women's health. The programme was presided over by Neena Ahrol, General Secretary of UNNAT NGO, who emphasized the need to



promote awareness regarding HPV vaccination among young girls and their families. Dr. Kartar Chand Sharma, Principal, GHSS Nowabad, attended the event as the Chief Guest. He appreciated the initiative taken by UNNAT NGO and encouraged students to adopt preventive

healthcare measures and spread awareness in society. Those present on the occasion included, Dharminder Sharma Block President Jammu West Conference, Anuja Ahrol, Vandana Ahrol, Ashwini Dubey, Mrs. Poonam, Mrs. Jyoti and Mrs. Upma.

University of Jammu Organises Pre-Admission Counselling Session for BA Programme at CDOE

JAMMU, May 25: The Centre for Distance and Online Education (CDOE), University of Jammu organized a Pre-Admission Counselling Session for the Bachelor of Arts (BA) Programme as part of the ongoing pre-admission counselling activities for Undergraduate and Postgraduate admissions for the academic session 2026-27. Around 200 prospective learners attended the session, which aimed to guide students about various academic opportunities, subject combinations, career prospects, and the flexible learning environment offered by CDOE. Director, CDOE, Prof. Pankaj Srivastava wel-



comed the prospective learners and highlighted the NAAC accreditation and NIRF rankings of the University, emphasizing its commitment towards quality education and academic excellence. He also spoke about the nationally acclaimed degree programmes offered by CDOE and the extracurricular activities aimed at the

Hyundai India Insurance Distributes 150 Smart Canes to Visually Impaired Persons in Jammu; MLA Sham Lal Sharma Announces Rs.10 Lakh Grant From CDF for School Development

JAMMU, MAY 25: In a major boost to accessible mobility in the region, Hyundai India Insurance Broking Pvt. Ltd., under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative for the financial year 2025-2026, distributed Saarthi Smart Canes and smart mobility devices to 150 visually impaired individuals from Jammu & Kashmir today. The mega distribution drive took place at the Louis Braille Memorial Residential School for Sightless Girls at Roop Nagar, Jammu (Ward 62), and was organized in close collaboration with the National Federation of the Blind (NFB), J&K. The advanced assistive devices distributed at the venue, valued at a total cost of 76,00,000, have been developed by the Ahmedabad-based Torchit Foundation, the technical partner for this initiative, with the core



objective of enhancing independent mobility, restoring confidence, and fostering greater social inclusion for visually impaired individuals across the Union Territory. The program was graced by Chief Guest Sham Lal Sharma, MLA Jammu North constituency, who highly commended Hyundai India Insurance Broking Pvt. Ltd.

and the Torchit Foundation for bringing life-altering technology to the region. Addressing the gathering, Sh. Sharma emphasized that true societal progress is measured by how effectively a community integrates and supports its differently-abled citizens, noting that assistive devices like the Saarthi cane are pivotal in bridging the gap

toward complete self-reliance. He highlighted that fostering independence among the visually impaired is a fundamental step toward safeguarding their right to a dignified and equitable life, while praising the National Federation of the Blind and the school faculty for their tireless grassroots work. He assured the management that continuous efforts are being made at the administrative level to upgrade public infrastructure and social welfare schemes to ensure better accessibility across the Union Territory and encourage warmly the beneficiaries, the MLA noted that the enthusiasm and resilience of the young girls and students present were deeply inspiring, and he urged other corporate houses and non-governmental organizations to draw inspiration from this large-scale initiative by increasing corporate investment in technology-

North in News

EDITORIAL

Nasha Mukht J&K Abhiyan: Drive against drugs must become a permanent mission

The Union Territory is facing a dual crisis of public health and security where narcotics are not merely a social evil but a weapon of narco-terrorism, and a sustained, multi-year campaign is the only way to break the supply-demand nexus that is stealing the youth of Jammu and Kashmir. The scale of the problem is evident in the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment's 2019 survey that estimated 6 lakh people in J&K affected by substance use, and recent data from the Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences Srinagar shows a 2,000 percent rise in patients seeking treatment for heroin addiction between 2016 and 2024.

With over 95 percent of users in the 15-35 age group, and the problem cuts across districts from Kupwara to Kathua because heroin smuggled via the LoC, pharmaceutical opioids diverted from neighbouring states, and synthetic drugs like MDMA ordered on the darknet are all converging on a generation that has grown up amid uncertainty, unemployment, and digital exposure, and the Nasha Mukht J&K Abhiyan launched by the UT administration under the larger Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan was a timely response that mobilized schools, colleges, PRIs, religious leaders, and police to take the pledge, conduct awareness rallies, and set up district-level committees. The drive against drugs should continue for long because addiction is a chronic, re-lapsing brain disease and because the supply chains adapt overnight, with drones now dropping packets in Samba and Jammu, with couriers using women and minors, with traffickers shifting from traditional routes and with terror groups using drug profits to fund recruitment and weapons, and therefore the Abhiyan must become a permanent mission. The Mission Youth J&K can link anti-drug volunteering to scholarships and jobs. The UT shares a 1,000-km border with Pakistan and is on the route from Afghanistan's Golden Crescent, so the Narco Coordination Centre must be strengthened with AI-based scanners at Lakhapur, drone jammers along the IB, and canine squads at railway stations, and the Police must be trained to use Section 27 of NDPS Act that gives immunity to users who seek treatment, so that the focus stays on kingpins, underground workers, and cross-border financiers. Fast-track NDPS courts must be set up to ensure conviction in 12 months because delayed trials help syndicates operate on bail. Also UT's Skill Development Mission must have an "UDAAN-Nasha Mukht" track with stipend-based training in tourism, handicrafts, IT, and logistics. Nasha Mukht J&K Abhiyan is not an event but an era, and it must continue until the last village in Kishtwar and the last ward in Srinagar can say with pride that their children are free, healthy, and full of dreams, and that is the real meaning of Naya Jammu Kashmir.

RAJNI SHARMA, EDITOR

BY DR BASUDEB DUTTA

Although health was not an election issue, after assuming office in West Bengal, the new chief minister Subhendu Adhikary has already conducted a meeting at SSKM hospital with all hospital superintendents with a mission to make health delivery smooth and to end 'Dalal raj' (agents or middlemen usually of ruling parties).

The previous government's legacy of a threat culture must be abolished and the CM needs to start from scratch. Free treatment for all is impractical; only BPL should get partial free treatment. For others, paid wards must be reintroduced with a professional approach. The West Bengal health system needs to be revamped. State hospitals are plagued with politics, corruption and very weak administration. Firstly, trade union activities must not be allowed in hospitals. Strikes or cease work in hospitals should be banned as it comes under emergency services. The public health system has improved significantly over the last few decades in areas such as rural healthcare access, maternal health, ambulance services, and health insurance coverage for some surgical procedures under schemes such as 'Swasthya Sathi'. Yet major challenges remain - like overcrowded Kolkata hospitals, shortage of specialists in districts, uneven infrastructure, long waiting times, and administrative centralisation. A decentralised revamp can make the system more efficient, equitable, and people-centric.

Inter-district competitive



excellence in healthcare should be upgraded into a mini-medical hub with ICU beds, advanced diagnostics, trauma care, dialysis, cancer screening, and not just naming them as 'super speciality hospitals.' Cities such as Siliguri, Malda, Burdwan, and Midnapore can serve as regional referral centres to reduce pressure on Kolkata hospitals. Second, administrative decentralisation is essential. District health units should receive greater financial and operational autonomy for hiring staff, maintaining infrastructure, and responding to local health needs. A malaria-prone district like Alipurduar may need different priorities from industrial Asansol, or densely populated North 24 Parganas. Local decision-making improves speed and accountability. Primary healthcare must become the backbone of the system.

The World Health Organization repeatedly stresses that strong primary care reduces hospital burden. At present with an increased number of medical seats - both UG and PG - there is no dearth of doctors. Health and Wellness Centres (NUHM&NRHMS)

should provide regular screening for diabetes, hypertension, mental health issues, maternal care, and elderly support. National health mission should have a separate office of their own to work in tandem with ULBs and panchayats. Well-equipped mobile clinics and properly functioning telemedicine can help remote areas and hill populations. Human-resource reform is another major necessity.

Continued training programmes for skill development of doctors should be the prerequisite for promotion to higher posts. Many doctors prefer Kolkata due to better facilities and career opportunities. The government can introduce district service incentives, housing, higher rural allowances, and faster promotions for doctors serving in underserved areas. Doctors must be available at least six days and forty-two hours per week. Restricted private practice may be allowed outside duty hours. Reintroduction of afternoon polyclinics is the need of the hour. Nursing and paramedical training institutes should also be expanded across districts. Poorly paid ASHA workers

should be incentivised for quality work. Digital integration can further improve decentralisation. A unified electronic health record system linking sub-centres, district hospitals, and medical colleges would reduce duplication and improve continuity of treatment. Teleconsultation between district hospitals and institutions like SSKM Hospital or other medical Colleges at Kolkata can bring specialist expertise to rural patients without requiring travel. Finally, public-private partnerships should be carefully used in diagnostics, emergency transport, and specialised services with supervision and maintaining strong government regulation.

Preventive healthcare campaigns on nutrition, sanitation, vaccination, and pollution-related diseases must also receive greater attention. A decentralised health system does not mean weakening Kolkata's premier hospitals; rather, it means creating multiple strong healthcare centres across West Bengal. If implemented effectively, decentralisation can reduce inequality, improve emergency response, lower patient costs, and bring quality healthcare closer to every citizen. Last but not the least, vandalism in medical institutes, destruction of government properties, manhandling medical personnel on self-made allegations of 'medical negligence' should be dealt with firmly. Special teams of 'hospital guards' need to be posted and also 'grievance redressal cells' should be made active to respond within 48 hours to public grievances.

Soil to Salon ~ I

BY GOVIND BHATTACHARJEE

Bengal today is crying for industry and employment. At independence, it was among India's leading industrial states. Kolkata and the Hooghly areas were hubs of many industries - jute mills, engineering industries, foundries, chemicals, port-linked commerce, rail workshops, headquarters of the tea industry, etc. The state was a major contributor to India's industrial output and tax revenues. Partition led to the loss of hinterlands and markets, and in the case of jute, raw materials.

But from the late 1960s onwards, the Left systematically began stoking labour unrest, crippling industries. In the early 1970s, the Naxal movement plunged the state into widespread political violence and chaos. When the Left Front came to power in 1977, Bengal's economy was already under stress, but instead of reversing the decline, their 34-year rule accelerated the exodus of industries and capital, leading to a prolonged industrial stagnation Bengal is yet to recover from. Till the early 1960s, Bengal was among India's richest and most industrialised states and contributed almost 11 per cent to the national GDP.

When the Left rule ended in 2011, this had declined to only 6 per cent, a decline unmatched by any other state, and has never improved since. Over this period, Maharashtra's share in India's GDP increased from 12 to 15 per cent, much at the cost of Bengal, while Gujarat's share doubled to 10 per cent. As a consequence of this decline, Bengal's economy became informalised and ancillarised, and the share of unregistered manufacturing in manufacturing GDP nearly doubled to 60 per cent in the 1990s from only 30 per cent

in the 1980s. The result was poor scale economics, lower productivity and insecure employees who sought protection, and continued voting for the CPM.

In the traditional industrial belts like Howrah, Barrackpore, Durgapur, Asansol and Hooghly, large industries collapsed. Many iconic and even public sector firms fell victim to Left-engineered strikes, lockouts, gharaos and political unionisation of workplaces, among them Jessop, Burn Standard, Braithwaite, GW, Metal Box, Indian Standard Wagon, and many others. While large factory employment stagnated, labour militancy rose and industries started shifting to Maharashtra and Gujarat.

The entrepreneurial dynamism of Bengal vanished and Bengal's image as an anti-business state became nationally entrenched. One major factor behind the flight of industries was a continuously deteriorating power situation. Generation could never keep pace with demand due to ageing thermal plants, inadequate transmission infrastructure and their poor maintenance, low investment, coal shortages, and financial weakness of the state electricity board. During the 1970s, load-shedding became so pervasive across the state that industrial units were facing power cuts lasting several hours daily.

Lacking captive power, small and medium enterprises suffered even more. Industries tend to locate near mineral and coal-producing regions to reduce transport costs, which gave Bengal and neighbouring states tremendous natural advantages. Coal from Raniganj and Jharia, rail, river and port access through Kolkata and availability of a skilled industrial workforce had given Bengal a strong comparative advantage in heavy industries like steel,

engineering, etc.

In 1952, the Government of India had announced a Freight Equalisation Policy under which the railway freight for key raw materials like coal, iron ore, and steel were subsidised. As the power situation in Bengal worsened, industries now started relocating to Maharashtra, Gujarat, or Tamil Nadu - being able to obtain these inputs at nearly the same cost, and neutralising Bengal's natural advantage. Then came the political instability between 1967 and 1972, including repeated changes of government and the resultant economic paralysis.

The offshoot of all this was that Bengal's position declined sharply relative to other states, and the 1991 liberalisation almost completely bypassed the state. While Maharashtra's per capita private investment in industry soared from Rs 679 in 1980 to Rs 12385 in 1994, for Bengal, it only rose from Rs 469 to Rs 4376 over this period. Gujarat's rise was even more striking, from Rs 1142 to Rs 22776. Between 1991 and 2003, Gujarat and Maharashtra together attracted roughly one-third of India's industrial investment proposals, while West Bengal attracted only 4.7 per cent of applications. In terms of value, Bengal's share was only 3.9 per cent, and only 35 per cent of these proposals materialised, compared to 55 per cent in Gujarat.

Organised manufacturing stagnated - the total organised industrial employment barely rose between 1977 and 1999, from 8.26 lakh to 8.81 lakh over 13 years, while small-scale and ancillary units started dominating the industrial landscape rather than large-scale manufacturing. As new vibrant industrial ecosystems emerged and thrived in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and

Karnataka, Kolkata, a flourishing industrial-commercial city till the 1960s, languished from bureaucratic rigidity, ideological suspicion of private capital and poor industrial infrastructure.

It was no longer a destination for industry and investment. The decline was accelerated by the government's staunch opposition to the introduction of computers during the late 1980s and early 1990s. In this dismal and hopeless scenario, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee attempted a dramatic policy shift by promoting IT, encouraging private investments, and inviting large industrial projects like that of Tata Motors at Singur-Nandigram. It was too late and could not overcome the internal ideological contradictions of a Left that was still living in the 19th century and had forgotten imagination.

The Singur-Nandigram movements not only politically destroyed the Left but also marked a major psychological setback for industrial investors, and the long shadow of Singur clung to the 15-year TMC rule that could not overcome investor anxiety or restore their confidence. Even 17 years later, the abandoned site symbolises the industrial insecurity in Bengal. Gujarat's automobiles, Tamil Nadu's electronics, Karnataka's tech manufacturing or Telangana's pharma clusters are shining examples of a new India, but in the traditional industrial corridors comprising Barrackpore, Howrah, Bhatpara, Jagaddal and Naihati, parts of the old manufacturing belt, increasingly witnessed a transition from industrial production toward land monetisation, informal urbanisation and real-estate activity, with allegations of politically mediated syndicate control over construction, benefiting local TMC goons.

From Green School Award to National Innovation Platforms- GHSS Dablehar continues to script story of excellence

Institution secures prestigious National-Level Recognition under ToFEI School Challenge

JAMMU, MAY 25: Government Higher Secondary School Dablehar has earned national recognition by securing the prestigious National-Level Consolation Prize under the ToFEI (Tobacco-Free Educational Institutions) School Challenge. Towards a Tobacco Free Generation organized by the Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education, Government of India. The honour was conferred after a comprehensive evaluation process conducted at the district, state and national levels. The GHSS Dablehar emerged among the best performing institutions of the country for its remarkable efforts in promoting awareness against tobacco use and fostering a healthy and tobacco-free environment among students. The achievement has been widely hailed as a proud moment for the entire education fraternity of Jammu and Kashmir. The success of the institution has been credited to the visionary leadership and dedicated efforts of Principal Irinder Kour, whose consistent guidance and commitment played a pivotal role in steering the campaign successfully. The tireless contribution of staff members, particularly Bhader Singh, Lecturer in Economics and incharge of

these events and initiatives, along with the enthusiastic participation of students, and staff members proved instrumental in securing this prestigious recognition at the national level. Chief Education Officer Sharma felicitated Principal Irinder Kour and appreciated the collective efforts of the school administration, staff members and students for bringing laurels to Jammu district and the Union Territory. The CEO lauded the institution for transforming awareness campaigns into meaningful social initiatives. He described the achievements of the school as an inspiring example of how government educational institutions can play a transformative role in shaping a healthier, aware, and socially responsible society. He also encouraged other schools to take inspiration from GHSS Dablehar and emulate its commitment towards building tobacco-free educational institutions. The Ministry of Education, Government of India, in its official communication, appreciated the active involvement of students and the support provided by teachers, school authorities and the Education Department in spreading awareness about the harmful effects of tobacco among young learners.

Perthently, GHSS Dablehar has, over the years, carved a distinct identity for itself through a series of remarkable achievements at the national and regional levels. The institution is notably the only Government School to secure a prestigious 5-Star rating in the Swachh Harit Vidyalaya Rating Survey 2025 after successful national-level validation, with formal national felicitations expected shortly. Adding further glory to the institution, two students of the school, Kamveer and Aryan, represented the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir in a National-Level Prototype Exhibition held at the prestigious Plaksha University Mohali-Punjab. The school also participated in the Viksit Bharat Buildathon 2025, launched by the Ministry of Education, Government of India, where its innovative idea and prototype successfully cleared multiple levels of evaluation and were submitted for recognition at the national level. In another major accomplishment, the institution secured the coveted Green School Award, for which a felicitations ceremony was held in New Delhi. Further strengthening its reputation for innovation and scientific temperament, the school's idea and prototype were selected under IIT

Jammu's flagship programme Prayagn. During the event, students from various schools of Ladakh UT and Jammu & Kashmir UT visited the school's stall and appreciated the innovative work displayed by the young students. Former Deputy Chief Minister Kavinder Gupta also visited the stall and applauded the creativity, talent and efforts of the budding innovators. Apart from these achievements, the institution has consistently performed exceptionally well in various state-level competitions and activities organized from time to time, further reinforcing its reputation as one of the leading government educational institutions of the region. As part of the latest recognition under the ToFEI School Challenge, a National Level Felicitations Ceremony is scheduled to be held on May 29, 2026 at Dr. Ambedkar International Centre (DAIC), New Delhi, where the winning schools from across the country will be formally honoured for their achievements. The accomplishment of GHSS Dablehar stands as a shining testimony to the dedication, teamwork, innovation and social commitment of government schools in nurturing responsible, aware, talented and health-conscious citizens.

UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PWD (R&B) DIVISION JAMMU EAST

SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Short e-NIT No. 10 of 2026-2027/Jammu East Dated 23-05-2026

For and on behalf of the Lieutenant Governor, Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir e-tenders are invited on percentage basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with Union Territory of J&K, CPWD, Railways, MES and other State / Central Govt. for each of the following works :-

S. No	Name of Work	Name of Division	Advertise of Cost (Rs. Lakh)	Cost of document (in Rs.)	Earnest Money (in Rs.)	Time Allowed for opening of tender	Time and date of opening of tender	Class of Contractor
1	Restoration & upkeeping works from Dogra Chowk to Secretariat via Indira Chowk & Gunal and all allied links to these roads for the year 2026-27	PWD (R&B) Division Jammu East	4.92	600	2% of Advertise Cost	Upto March 2027	(1200 Hrs) on or after 01-06-2026	A, B, C & D
2	Restoration & upkeeping works from Dogra Chowk to Vivekanand Chowk via Fortune Hotel, Residency Road to DC office via CM House, Gummot to Guggir Nagar bridge and all allied links to these roads for the year 2026-27	PWD (R&B) Division Jammu East	4.92	600	2% of Advertise Cost	Upto March 2027	(1200 Hrs) on or after 01-06-2026	A, B, C & D
3	Day to day maintenance of CPO Chowk to Mian Dido Chowk via Central Jail Amthalala and Panthri to Rehari Chungi via Kachi Chowni Exchange road and all allied links to these roads for the year 2026-27	PWD (R&B) Division Jammu East	4.94	600	2% of Advertise Cost	Upto March 2027	(1200 Hrs) on or after 01-06-2026	A, B, C & D

Position of AAA/TS: Accorded under NON PLAN

The bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings, bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen / downloaded from the departmental website <http://jitenders.gov.in> as per below schedule :-

1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	23-05-2026
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	From 23-05-2026 to 30-05-2026 upto 1800 Hrs
3	Date, Time and place of pre-bid meeting	26-05-2026 at 12:00hrs, in the Office of Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Division Jammu East
4	Bid submission Start Date	23-05-2026
5	Bid Submission End Date	23-05-2026 upto 1800 Hrs
6	Date & time of opening of Technical Bids (Online)	01-06-2026 up to or after 1200 Hrs in the Office of Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Division Jammu East
7	Date & time of opening of Financial Bids	To be notified after technical bid evaluation is completed

- Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of e-challan through Treasury indicating Treasury Voucher No. & date, e-NIT No. and name of work duly crediting to MH 0059 (Revenue) favouring Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Division Jammu East and upload the same in treasury challan / receipt. Earnest money/Bid security in shape of CDR/FDR/BC pledged to Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Division Jammu East. The CDR/FDR/BC shall be valid for 45 Days beyond the bid validity period. The original instruments in respect of cost of documents, EMD and relevant documents of LI be submitted to the Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Division Jammu East at the time of allotment.
- The electronic bidding system would not allow any late submission of bids after due date and time as per server time. Bidders may modify their bids by uploading their request for modification before the deadline for submission of bids. For this, the bidder needs not to make any additional payment towards the cost of tender document. For bid modification and consequential re-submission, the bidder is not required to withdraw his bid submitted earlier. The last modified bid submitted by the bidder within the bid submission time shall be considered as the bid. For this purpose, modification/withdrawal by other means will not be accepted. In online system of bid submission, the modification and consequential submission of bids is allowed any number of times. The bidders may withdraw his bid by uploading their request before the deadline for submission of bids; however, if the bid is withdrawn, the re-submission of the bid is not allowed. No bid shall be modified or withdrawn after the deadline of submission of bids.
- The date and time of opening of Financial-Bids shall be notified on Web Site www.jitenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The Financial-bids of responsive bidders shall be opened online in the Office of Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Division Jammu East. The date for same shall be intimated separately.
- The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of Technical bids.
- The earnest money shall be forfeited, if-
a) Any bidder/tender withdraws his bid/tender during the period of bid validity or makes any modifications in the terms and conditions of the bid.
b) Failure of Successful bidder to furnish the required performance security within specified time period after issue of letter of acceptance.
c) Failure of successful bidder to execute the agreement on same day of allotment of work contract as per Chief Engineer PW (R&B) Department Jammu's Circular No. CEJ/G/12660-87 dated 07-10-2021.
- Instruction to bidders regarding e-tendering process.
- Bidders are advised to download bid submission manual from the "Downloads" option as well as from "Bidders Manual Kit" on website www.jitenders.gov.in to acquaint bid submission process.
- To participate in bidding process, bidders have to get 'Digital Signature Certificate (DSC)' as per Information Technology Act-2000. Bidders can get digital certificate from any approved vendors.
- The bidders have to submit their bids online in electronic format with digital Signature. No financial bid will be accepted in physical form.
- Bids will be opened online as per time schedule mentioned above.
- Bidders must ensure to upload scanned copy of all necessary documents mentioned in NIT and SBD with technical bid online.
- Note - Scan all the documents on 100 dpi with black and white option.
The department will not be responsible for any delay in online submission due to any reasons.
- Scanned copy of cost of tender document in shape of e-challan through Treasury indicating Treasury Voucher No. & date, e-NIT No. and name of work duly crediting to MH - 0059 (Revenue) favouring Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Division Jammu East and upload the same in treasury challan/receipt, Earnest money/Bid security in shape of CDR/FDR/BC pledged to Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Division Jammu East and Correctness of information on the notarized affidavit which must be notarized between the period of downloading of bidding document as per the format mentioned in the e-NIT/SBD with the technical documents of the bid.
- Bidders may contact office of the Chief Engineer PW (R&B) Department, Jammu or concerned Executive Engineer for any guidance for getting DSC or any other relevant details in respect of e-tendering process.
- Bidders are advised not to make any change in BOQ (Bill of Quantities) contents. In no case they should attempt to create similar BOQ manually. The BOQ downloaded should be used for filling the percentage inclusive of all taxes and it should be saved with the same name as it contains.

No -
Date :-

Executive Engineer
PWD (R&B) Division
Jammu East

DIP/J-2638/26

IN THE COURT LD. EMIC BILLAWAR

Sh. Makhan Lal S/o Sh. Charan Dass R/o Bhaddu, Tehsil Billawar, District Kathua J&K UT.

(Applicant)

VERSUS

1. Block Development Officer, Billawar. 2. Chowkidar Concerned

In the matter of - Application u/s 13(3) of Birth and death registration Act, 1969 for seeking direction to I/C Block Development Officer, Billawar to register the date of birth of applicant namely Makhan Lal in concern birth registers, was born on 10-04-1988.

(Respondents)

The applicant most respectfully submits as under:
20/5/31 That the applicant namely Makhan Lal born at village Dadwara, on 10-04-1988. But his date of birth could not get registered in concern birth register of reason that the

Chowkidar/B.D.O. Billawar/Police Station Billawar till date due to the fact of registration of date of birth with the concerned Chowkidar, was ignorant 2. That the applicant now needs birth certificate as authentic proof but without registration of birth it is not possible to get the birth certificate. As such prays for seeking direction to Block Development Officer, Billawar to register the date of birth of said applicant in concern birth register.

Sir,

3. The detail particulars of said applicant are as under:

Name of Child Mother's name Father's Name D.O.B Gender Place of Birth Makhan Lal Smt. Guddi Devi Sh. Charan Dass 10-04-1988 Male Bhaddu

4. That there is no more application of same nature is pending in any court except present application and applicant residence and place of birth is under the jurisdiction of Hon'ble Court hence has power to decide present application. An affidavit in support is also annexed herewith. It is therefore prayed before Hon'ble Court to please pass direction u/s 13(3) of Birth and Death registration Act 1969 for seeking direction to I/C Block Development Officer, Billawar to register the date of birth of applicant namely Makhan Lal in concern birth register, was born 10-04-1988.

Applicant

NOTICE

I, JAGDISH KUMAR S/o PINDI DASS R/o DUTHAN Tehsil and District Ramban I have applied for correction of my child Adhar name which has wrongly recorded as adhar MAN MEET SHARMA S/o JAGDISH KUMAR the actual name as per record is MANMEET SHARMA S/o JAGDISH KUMAR Now the public at large is hereby informed that it is certified that I have complied with other legal requirements in this connection

NOTICE

I Rubi D/o Mohammad Hussain R/o Halla Tehsil and Distt. Ramban have applied for correction of my name which has been wrongly written as Rubina bano instead of correct name Rubi in my Aadhar Card bearing No 689325401778 objection if any may be conveyed to the concerned authority within seven days from the date of publication of this notice.

IN THE COURT OF EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE

IST CLASS TEHSILDAR RAMBAN

SHANKER DASS S/O GIKU RAM R/O SERI, TEHSIL & DISTRICT RAMBAN.

V/s

(Applicant)

UT OF J&K THROUGH BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICER RAMBAN.

(Non-Applicant)

PUBLIC NOTICE

Whereas the applicant named above has sought a direction from Block Development Officer Ramban for registration of Date of applicant's brother, namely Mool Singh, in Birth / Death record Register who was born on 06-01-1980, at home in village Seri. Whereas the public at large is informed through the medium of this notice that if any person/persons have any objection regarding the registration through personal, post, e-mail or any other justified medium with respect to the birth of the applicant's brother, mentioned above, he or she shall file his/her objections within 07 days to this court from the date of publication of this notice in the newspaper, failing which appropriate order shall be passed. In case the date fixed is declared as holiday, the matter shall be taken up on the next working day.

Given under my hand and seal of this Court on 28-5-2026

Sd/

Executive Magistrate 1st Class
Tehsildar Ramban

NOTICE

I Hafiz ur Rehman S/o Gh Abbas Shake R/o Marog Tehsil and Distt. Ramban have applied for correction of my Daughter name which has been wrongly written as Humeera Hafiz instead of correct name Suhana in my Aadhar Card bearing No 762028876355 objection if any may be conveyed to the concerned authority within seven days from the date of publication of this notice.

NOTICE

I, BALBIR SINGH S/o SHIV NATH R/o NEGHAI Tehsil and District Ramban I have applied for correction of my child Adhar name which has wrongly recorded as adhar RANGAIL KUMAR S/o BALBIR SINGH the actual name as per record is RANGEEL KUMAR S/o BALBIR SINGH Now the public at large is hereby informed that it is certified that I have complied with other legal requirements in this connection

NOTICE

I Abdul Jabar S/o Abdul Rashid R/o kanga Tehsil and Distt. Ramban have applied for correction of my son name which has been wrongly written as Saraan Ahmed instead of correct name Sehraan Ahmed in my Aadhar Card bearing No 726242516497 objection if any may be conveyed to the concerned authority within seven days from the date of publication of this notice.

Federation Cup 2026: Dev Kumar Meena and Kuldeep Kumar break national pole vault record with 5.45m clearances

New Delhi, May 25: Indian athletics witnessed another historic evening at the 29th National Senior Athletics Federation Cup as Madhya Pradesh's Dev Kumar Meena and Kuldeep Kumar jointly rewrote the men's pole vault national record with identical clearances of 5.45m at the Birsa Munda Stadium on Sunday.

In one of the standout moments of the competition, the two training partners pushed each other to new heights in a dramatic head-to-head battle that saw the national record broken multiple times within minutes. Kuldeep Kumar had entered the competition as the national record holder after recently clearing 5.41m in Bhubaneswar. However, Dev Kumar Meena was the first to go past that mark in Ranchi, clearing 5.42m to briefly claim the national



record for himself. Moments later, Kuldeep responded with a brilliant clearance of 5.45m to reclaim the record. Not willing to be left behind, Dev matched the effort on his very next attempt, ensuring both athletes finished the competition as joint national record holders with identical marks of 5.45m. While Dev Kumar Meena secured the gold medal on countback, Kuldeep Kumar settled for silver despite matching the same height. Their performances also comfortably surpassed the Commonwealth Games qualification mark of 5.25m. The duo then attempted 5.50m in a bid to extend the national record even further, but neither athlete managed to clear the height. Still, the electrifying contest had already become one of the defining highlights of this year's Federation Cup.

"It was a good day for us and we will continue to push each other to further raise the bar in future,"

Dev Kumar Meena said after winning gold. Sunday's action in Ranchi also produced several other impressive performances across track and field events. In the men's long jump, Olympian M Sreeshankar clinched gold with a leap of 8.08m, crossing the Commonwealth Games qualification mark of 8.05m. Sarvesh Anil Kushare dominated the men's high jump competition with a winning effort of 2.28m, equalling the meet record set by Tejaswin Shankar and also surpassing the CWG qualification standard of 2.22m. He later attempted 2.30m in pursuit of a new national record but failed to clear the height.

In the men's 110m hurdles, Tejas Ashok Shirde improved his own meet record with a gold-winning time of 13.50 seconds,

though he narrowly missed the Commonwealth Games qualification mark of 13.39 seconds. Earlier in the day, Haryana's Ravina secured gold in the women's 10000m race walk with a timing of 44:29.66 seconds, comfortably breaching the Commonwealth Games qualification standard. The Federation Cup has already produced multiple record-breaking moments, including Gurindervir Singh becoming the first Indian sprinter to clock sub-10.10 seconds in the men's 100m with a national record time of 10.09 seconds earlier in the competition. With several athletes achieving qualification standards and national records tumbling in Ranchi, the 2026 Federation Cup has emerged as a major statement event for Indian athletics ahead of upcoming international competitions.

Hamilton Unlocks Ferrari Magic With Montreal Breakthrough



New Delhi, May 25: Lewis Hamilton celebrated his strongest performance yet in Ferrari red after finishing second at the Canadian Grand Prix on Sunday, crediting behind-the-scenes changes and a fresh approach to car setup for finally unlocking his potential with the Italian team.

The seven-times Formula One world champion passed Red Bull's Max Verstappen in the closing laps at Montreal's Circuit Gilles Villeneuve to secure his second podium finish this season, after the Chinese Grand Prix in March.

"The prep before, I chose a different set-up this weekend through just ciphering through the data, working really well with my engineer," Hamilton said. "I was able to attack all the corners finally."

Hamilton praised Ferrari team principal Fred Vasseur's support in implementing changes to make him more comfortable in the car.

"There's a lot of changes that I've had to ask for, and Fred's been super supportive and again also moving mountains in order to make me comfortable. And it's finally starting to show in my performance."

The 41-year-old driver was also grateful for the work of his engineers, including Cedric Sauti, who replaced veteran Riccardo Adami at the start of the year on an interim basis.

"I'm really grateful to the team for continuing to hold me up high and support me weekend in, weekend out. And it's a really lovely feeling to see them so happy, because they truly deserve it with all the hard work they put in."

The result proved particularly encouraging given Montreal's emphasis on straight-line speed, an area where Ferrari had traditionally struggled.

Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, Indian Navy Hail Gurindervir Singh After Historic 10.09s Sprint



New Delhi, May 25: Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Sunday congratulated sprinter Gurindervir Singh after he became the first Indian to clock below 10.10 seconds in the men's 100m event. The Indian Navy also hailed the athlete for his historic feat. In a post on X, Mandaviya

wrote: "10.09 seconds! Gurindervir Singh, you have rewritten history. The entire nation is incredibly proud of you!"

The Indian Navy also congratulated Gurindervir, who serves as a Petty Officer in the force, saying in a post on X: "#IndianNavy salutes the spirit, speed and dedication

'Never Experienced My Country At A World Cup In My Life': Haaland On Norway's FIFA World Cup Return After 28 Years

Norway, May 25: Norway striker Erling Haaland said qualifying for the FIFA World Cup was a dream fulfilled after his country sealed a return to football's biggest stage for the first time in 28 years. Norway last appeared at a major international tournament at UEFA Euro 2000 — 19 days before Haaland was born — while their previous FIFA World Cup appearance came at France 1998. The Scandinavian side confirmed qualification for the 2026 World Cup in Canada, Mexico and the United States with a 4-1 victory over Italy in their final qualifier. Haaland played a pivotal role in Norway's qualification campaign, scoring in all eight qualifiers, including five goals against Moldova and a brace in the decisive win over Italy to finish with a joint-record 16 goals in qualifying. "I've never experi-



enced Norway being at the World Cup in my life, so I think it was about time. For me personally, it's a huge thing. I've said it for a long time — my big goal is to get Norway to the World Cup," Haaland told FIFA. "That's what I've tried to work towards. Now it's finally happened and I'm super happy for that, and super excited for what's next. You could feel the

relief and joy across the country. It was amazing to experience," he added. Haaland said qualifying carried added emotional significance because he grew up without watching Norway compete at the World Cup. "I never experienced the World Cup as a kid in this country. So, I'm super happy for the kids in Norway to experience it, because I would have loved to see Norway playing at the World Cup. Every time I watched the tournament, I was supporting another country. So, it's going to be nice," he said. Reflecting on Norway's opening game at Boston Stadium against Iraq, Haaland described the occasion as a "dream come true. It will feel kind of like a dream come true. It's more special because I've never experienced it before. I don't know what I'm going into because I've never been there. I'm just looking forward to it — it's going to be amazing," he said. The tournament also carries personal significance for the Manchester City forward. His father, Ingve Haaland, represented Norway at the 1994 FIFA World Cup in the United States, including a 1-0 defeat to Italy at Giants Stadium. Norway will return to the US for all three of their group-stage matches.

What is Lionel Messi's net worth? Inter Miami star becomes second billionaire footballer after Ronaldo

New Delhi, May 25: Lionel Messi has officially joined the billionaire club, becoming only the second footballer in history after Cristiano Ronaldo to cross the \$1 billion net worth mark, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. The Argentine icon, currently playing for Inter Miami in Major League Soccer (MLS), has built his fortune through a combination of football salaries, bonuses, endorsements, investments and long-term commercial partnerships across Europe and the United States. What is Lionel Messi's net worth? According to Bloomberg's analysis, Lionel Messi's net worth has now crossed \$1 billion. The report states that the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner has earned more than \$700 million in salaries and bonuses since 2007 alone. Apart from his



earnings on the pitch, Messi has significantly expanded his financial portfolio through endorsement deals, sponsorships and investments. His partnerships with major global brands, combined with his move to the United States in 2023, have further boosted his commercial value. Unlike Cristiano Ronaldo's highly aggressive per-

sonal branding strategy, Messi's financial growth has largely been driven through carefully managed business decisions and family-led investments. Since joining Inter Miami, Messi has transformed the football landscape in the United States. His arrival in MLS triggered record-breaking attendance numbers, increased global interest

in the league and a surge in sponsorship and merchandising activity. His influence has now extended beyond football as well. Ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, a township in New Jersey officially named a road "Leo Messi Way" in honour of the Argentina captain. The initiative was approved by residents of Berkeley Heights in Union County through the BH FIFA World Cup 26 Task Force, which was formed to promote community engagement ahead of the tournament. Messi and Argentina ahead of FIFA World Cup 2026. Messi, who led Argentina to FIFA World Cup glory in Qatar in 2022, is expected to remain central to the national team's plans heading into the 2026 tournament, which will be jointly hosted by the United States, Mexico and Canada.

French Open: Djokovic Survives Mpetshi Perricard Scare To Enter Second Round



New Delhi, May 25: Novak Djokovic survived a stiff first-round challenge from home favourite Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard to begin his campaign at the French Open with a four-set win at Roland Garros on Monday. The 24-time Grand Slam champion recovered from a set down to defeat the big-serving Frenchman 5-7, 7-5, 6-1, 6-4 and advance to the second round in Paris. Playing his record 82nd Grand Slam main draw in the French capital, moving ahead of Roger Federer and Feliciano Lopez, Djokovic extended his remarkable record in opening-round matches at majors to 80-2. The Serbian has not lost a

Grand Slam opener since the 2006 Australian Open. Djokovic also improved to 22-0 in first-round matches at Roland Garros — the most opening-round wins by any man at the tournament without a defeat in the Open era. He is now unbeaten in 13 meetings against French players in Paris.

The sixth seed, however, Mpetshi Perricard's booming serve in their first career meeting. Djokovic failed to enter a break point in the opening set and was broken at 5-5 as the Frenchman became the first home player to take a set off him at Roland Garros in 14 years.

Rahul, Kuldeep Star As DC End Campaign With 40-Run Win Over KKR

New Delhi, May 25: A fluent half-century from KL Rahul and a sharp bowling display led by Lungi Ngidi and Kuldeep Yadav helped Delhi Capitals finish their IPL 2026 season on a winning note with a comprehensive 40-run victory over Kolkata Knight Riders at Eden Gardens on Sunday. Asked to bat first, DC posted 203/5 — their highest total at the venue — with Rahul blazing 60 off just 30 balls at a strike rate of 200. David Miller added a late flourish with a 19-ball 28, while Axar Patel contributed 39 off 25 deliveries.



In reply, KKR were bowled out for 163 in 18.4 overs despite skipper Ajinkya Rahane scoring a fighting 63 off 39 balls. KKR looked well placed at 128/3 before the innings unravelled dramatically. Kuldeep Yadav tamed the match in DC's favour with two wickets in successive deliveries, dismissing Rahane and Rinku Singh to trigger a collapse. The hosts eventually lost their final seven wickets for just 35 runs. Lungi Ngidi finished with 3/27, while Kuldeep returned figures of 3/29 after going

"Gave Hardik Pandya Best Opportunity, Tried Everything": MI Coach Kieron Pollard's Blunt Verdict

New Delhi, May 25: Hardik Pandya's captaincy future at Mumbai Indians could be under jeopardy after the franchise finished 9th in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 season. Hardik didn't just let down the management with his failure to get the best out of his team but was also a disappointment as a player, both with the bat and the ball. Mumbai Indians batting coach Kieron Pollard, speaking at the press conference after the defeat against the Rajasthan Royals in the team's final game on Sunday, admitted that skipper Hardik's leadership stint "has not gone as well." He didn't shy away from admitting that Hardik has been a disappoint-



ment in doing what the franchise would have hoped. "From a leadership perspective on Hardik, yes, it has not gone as well as he would have wanted as an individual," Pollard told reporters after the match. "It might not have gone how we would have wanted as a

management staff. But one thing you (should) know that we have tried each and everything to give him the best opportunity to lead the franchise, to do well." Pollard said it was a collective failure of the Mumbai Indians group. "No one is going to sit here and put

blame on point fingers. When you lose, especially, you have to look at it from a collective perspective. You win some, you lose some. But, at the end of the day, I wouldn't question certain things," he said. "He (Pandya) was trying; we all were trying, and it just didn't work out for us. You sit, you talk, (and) see what is (for) the best. Never know what is going to happen. For us, let us just lick our wounds in (this) time and hopefully come back stronger in the 12 months," Pollard said. Pollard had no qualms in admitting that changes will be made to the Mumbai Indians roster ahead of the next season, but ruled out making any rushed decisions.

'PM's forex conservation appeal very important amid escalating West Asia crisis,' says FM Nirmala; assures India's economy remains positive

New Delhi, May 25: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman today asserted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to conserve foreign exchange "as far as possible" has become increasingly significant as the escalating West Asia crisis threatens to push up fuel costs, disrupt supply chains and create uncertainty for businesses across sectors. Addressing the SIDBI Foundation Day event in Mumbai, Sitharaman also reassured citizens that despite global turbulence, India's domestic economy continues to remain stable and resilient. She also cautioned against fear-driven narratives about the country's economic outlook.



West Asia conflict could hit fuel, trade and supply chains. Highlighting the economic risks arising from the ongoing tensions in West Asia, the Finance Minister said the impact extends far beyond diplomacy and geopolitics, directly affecting trade, logistics and everyday business operations. She said rising global instability could lead to higher fuel prices, delays in cargo movement, increased shipping expenses and shortages of critical inputs. According to Sitharaman, such disruptions could also place pressure on working capital requirements and affect export orders for Indian businesses.

The Minister said the Centre's priority remains protecting citizens from global shocks while ensuring support for MSMEs and exporters. She stressed that maintaining uninterrupted supply chains and preserving economic stability remain key areas of focus for the government amid the evolving international situation. In that context, Sitharaman underlined the importance of the Prime Minister's call to minimise unnecessary foreign exchange outflows. "India continues as a robust economy," Sitharaman strongly defended India's economic position, asserting that the country remains resilient despite external challenges and warning against pessimistic commentary that could weaken public confidence. She criticised what she called "fear-mongering" by sections that quickly project negative narratives about the economy during periods of global uncertainty. According to the Finance Minister, such reactions undermine the achievements of Indians and create unnecessary anxiety. Emphasising the need for confidence and stability, she said India cannot afford cynical narratives at a time when the country continues to maintain economic strength despite international pressures. Over Rs 1 lakh crore revenue impact expected.

Himanta Biswa Sarma's govt tables UCC Bill in Assam Assembly, CM calls it 'need of the hour'

Guwahati, May 25: On behalf of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, state minister Atul Bora on Monday, May 25 tabled the Uniform Civil Code Bill, 2026, in the Legislative Assembly. Sarma later took to social media to mention that the move was a significant step towards initiating a formal and comprehensive discussion on the need for a Uniform Civil Code in the state. Sarma said that the introduction of the Bill would pave the way for "an on record discussion" on why UCC is necessary for the state. "The introduction of the Uniform Civil Code 2026 Bill in the Assam Vidhan Sabha paves the way for an on record discussion on why #UCCAssam is the need of



the hour and how it will help realise the path laid down by our founding fathers," Sarma wrote on X. In the coming days, the proposed legislation is expected to trigger major debate in the Assam Assembly and the public sphere. Supporters of UCC have argued that a common civil code would ensure equality before the law, besides streamlining personal laws across communities. IANS reported. The latest move by the Himanta Biswa Sarma-led government in Assam comes amid renewed discussions surrounding the implementation of a Uniform Civil Code that is aimed at replacing religion-based personal laws governing key matters like marriage, divorce and inheritance among others.

Nashik TCS harassment case: SIT summons AIMIM corporator Mateen Patel amid widening probe



New Delhi, May 25: Nashik Police's Special Investigation Team (SIT) has summoned AIMIM corporator Mateen Patel from Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj in connection with the alleged harassment case linked to Tata Consultancy Services' BPO unit in Nashik. Officials said Patel has been called for

questioning under Section 35(3) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS). Investigators are looking into allegations related to his purported assistance to one of the accused, Nida Khan, during the course of the case. The development comes days after the SIT filed a massive 1,500-page chargesheet before a Nashik court, marking a significant step in the investigation that has drawn attention across Maharashtra over allegations of workplace harassment, religious conversion, and identity manipulation. According to police officials, further investigation into the matter is still underway. SIT claims evidence of forced religious conversion - a statement issued by the office of Nashik Police Commissioner Sandeep Karik. The SIT said it had gathered evidence suggesting that the victim was allegedly forced into religious conversion, an act investigators claim hurt religious sentiments. Police also said they had seized original documents allegedly used to change the victim's name and identity.

'Bomb factories, serial blasts and a nationwide terror blueprint': NIA uncovers shocking scale of Faridabad terror module

New Delhi, May 25: Sprawling terror conspiracy stretching far beyond Faridabad has come to light after the National Investigation Agency (NIA) uncovered the Faridabad terror module's plans for multiple bomb-making facilities, repeated high-intensity explosions and coordinated strikes targeting crowded and high-security locations across India. Investigators now believe the dismantled Faridabad terror module was only the starting point of a much larger operation designed to create sustained panic through serial attacks. Nearly 2,900 kilograms of fertiliser were seized by the NIA during the probe. According to reports, the seizure allegedly meant for explosive preparation may have prevented a chain of devastating attacks. Agencies say the accused were not preparing for a single strike, but



were allegedly building a network capable of carrying out repeated explosions across different states over an extended period. Officials probing the case say the Faridabad facility was allegedly planned as an operational hub targeting Delhi and nearby regions, while separate units were being planned for Uttar Pradesh and other locations. The investigation has also revealed that the terror network intended to establish bomb-making units in multiple cities, with Uttar Pradesh

emerging as a major focus of the alleged plot. Probe points to Indian Mujahideen-type terror strategy. Investigators claim the accused had already begun groundwork for expanding operations outside Haryana and were scouting locations to create additional explosive manufacturing centres. After Faridabad, Lucknow was allegedly identified as the next major base for the operation. Agencies believe the strategy mirrored the pattern once adopted by Indian Mujahideen operatives, where explosive operations were carried out in phases to maintain fear and uncertainty over long periods. Officials say the alleged plan relied heavily on surprise strikes at frequent intervals rather than a single coordinated attack. NIA chargesheet details alleged explosive procurement

Legal battle over Delhi Gymkhana Club: Member moves High Court after Centre seeks takeover of iconic Lutyns' property

New Delhi, May 25: The legal battle over one of the capital's most prominent institutional properties intensified on Monday after the Delhi Gymkhana Club approached the High Court against the Centre's move to reclaim its sprawling Safdarjung Road premises, citing national security and public infrastructure requirements. The dispute centres around the 27.3-acre property located near the Prime Minister's official residence in the high-security Lutyns' Delhi zone. The matter gained urgency after the Union government issued directions asking the club to vacate the premises by June 5, triggering concern among members of one of India's oldest social institutions.



The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, acting through the Land and Development Office, has formally issued an eviction notice to the club management. High Court to hear challenge against eviction Monday by senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, who sought an urgent hearing on behalf of club member Vijay Khurana. Following the request, the Delhi High Court agreed to take up the matter on Tuesday, May 26. The challenge has been filed against the Union government's decision to resume possession of the

property situated at 2, Safdarjung Road, an area that falls within the heavily secured administrative and diplomatic heart of the national capital. Centre cites public security and defence requirements. According to the notice issued on May 22 by Deputy Land and Development Officer Suchit Goyal, the government intends to reclaim the land for strengthening defence-linked infrastructure and other strategic public security needs. The communication stated that the land was required to meet urgent governance and institutional demands and would also be integrated with adjoining government properties earmarked for public-interest projects. Invoking provisions of the perpetual lease agreement, the Centre said the lessor retained the authority to retake possession of the property if the land became necessary for public purposes. The notice further stated that the President of India, acting through the Land and Development Office, had exercised those powers and ordered re-entry into the premises. The government also maintained that all structures, facilities, lawns and fittings situated on the property would vest fully with the President upon resumption of possession. Historic institution at centre of high-profile dispute Established in 1913 during the colonial period, the Delhi Gymkhana Club remains one of the country's most exclusive.

300 cow carcasses found dumped near Jaisalmer, outrage erupts after videos go viral

New Delhi, May 25: More than 300 dead cows were found lying in the open at a municipal dumping yard near Rajasthan's Jaisalmer, sparking outrage after disturbing videos from the site spread widely on social media on Sunday. The incident, which surfaced from a dumping ground on Rangbar Road around 7 km from the district headquarters, has intensified questions over cattle protection, civic oversight, and the handling of dead animal disposal in the region. The visuals angered many locals and cow lovers, who said the condition in which the animals were found exposed the reality behind repeated claims of cow welfare and protection. According to police and local officials, the carcasses had allegedly been dumped in the open



instead of being disposed of in the designated area assigned to the contractor responsible for handling dead animals within Municipal Council limits. The matter came to light after a group of Gau Premis visited the dumping yard on Saturday and found carcasses scattered across the area. As the videos spread across social media on Sunday, anger began building among local residents and people associated with cow welfare groups. Following the uproar, Jaisalmer District Collector Anupama Jorwal sought a factual report on the matter. Municipal Council Commissioner Lalpal Singh Sodha issued a show cause notice to the contractor concerned. Contractor issued notice already taken place. The court also recorded that state authorities themselves had recommended a CBI inquiry. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Madhya Pradesh government, informed the Bench that the central agency would take over the contract for lifting dead animals, skin, and bones.

Autobrickshaw driver found hanging from tree near Delhi's Yamuna Khadar; probe underway

New Delhi, May 25: In a shocking incident, Delhi Police on Monday morning recovered the body of a 38-year-old man found hanging from a tree near the Yamuna Khadar area in Burari. The deceased was later identified as Akhilesh, who belonged to the Burari area and reportedly used to work as an autobrickshaw driver. According to IANS, Akhilesh's family members have told police officials that he left the house at 10 p.m. on Sunday after having his dinner. He is said to have informed them that he was stepping out to buy some items, but did not return home. On Monday morning, locals - out for a morning walk - discovered Akhilesh's body hanging from a tree near the Yamuna Khadar stretch. Soon after, they called



police. Later on, officials from the Wazirabad Police Station arrived at the spot and took his body into custody. They have launched an investigation into the matter to ascertain the circumstances surrounding the death. Shocked by the incident, Akhilesh's family members have demanded for a thorough investigation into the case. "My daughter called me and told me that Akhilesh bhैया had died. Then I came here today. I do not know much about what happened or how it happened. He used to drive an autobrickshaw here," IANS quoted a relative as saying. Another relative of the deceased noted that Akhilesh left house at around 10 p.m. last night and did not return. "Then, information spread that he was found hanging from a tree. We want a proper investigation into the matter. He had no dispute with anyone," the person added.

'Don't reduce pain into sound bites': CBI to probe Twisha Sharma death; SC asks media, families to avoid public statements

New Delhi, May 25: The Supreme Court on Monday cautioned against a "media narrative" in the Twisha Sharma death case and asked both the victim's family and the accused side to avoid making public statements as the Madhya Pradesh government informed the court that the probe would be transferred to the CBI. The top court, which had initiated suo motu proceedings over allegations of procedural lapses and institutional bias in the investigation, said it wanted the matter to be examined in a "fair, independent and unbiased" manner. A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said the atmosphere around the case had become concerning, particularly with competing public claims emerging through television debates and social media statements. "We are slightly at pain," the CJ observed during the hearing, while urging restraint from all stakeholders. "Don't go for the statements of the victim's family or the other family.



Otherwise, one section is saying the judiciary is not allowing a fair trial." The case pertains to a model-turned-actor Twisha Sharma who was found hanging at her matrimonial home in Bhopal's Kataria Hills area on May 12. Her family has alleged dowry harassment, cruelty and abetment to suicide against her husband, suspended lawyer Samarth Singh, and her mother-in-law, a retired judge. Supreme Court flags media narrative around Twisha Sharma case. The Bench, also comprising Justices Jaymyla Bagchi and Vipul M Panchohi, said the court had no doubts about the credibility of either the state agencies or the CBI, but added that "a kind of narrative" was being built publicly around the case. "We will

ensure that the unfortunate incident that took place is fairly and impartially investigated," the CJ said. During the hearing, the apex court noted that multiple concerns had surfaced in the matter, including issues linked to the second post-mortem examination and the cremation having already taken place. The court also recorded that state authorities themselves had recommended a CBI inquiry. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Madhya Pradesh government, informed the Bench that the central agency would take over the contract for lifting dead animals, skin, and bones. The court also recorded that state authorities themselves had recommended a CBI inquiry. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Madhya Pradesh government, informed the Bench that the central agency would take over the contract for lifting dead animals, skin, and bones. The court also recorded that state authorities themselves had recommended a CBI inquiry. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Madhya Pradesh government, informed the Bench that the central agency would take over the contract for lifting dead animals, skin, and bones.

Iran deal could still take days, says report; Trump says it'll be nothing like Obama's

Washington, May 25: US President Donald Trump on Sunday said negotiations with Iran were progressing "constructively" but made it clear that Washington would not rush into signing an agreement, even as the White House reportedly expressed confidence that a deal could be approved within days. According to an Axios report cited by US media, senior American officials believe Iran's leadership may take a few more days to clear the proposed agreement. However, officials also admitted that negotiations remain unfinished and there is still a possibility that the talks could collapse before a final deal is signed. Trump, in a series of posts on Truth Social, repeatedly sought to distance the ongoing negotiations from the 2015 nuclear agreement brokered during former President Barack Obama's administration. Calling the earlier deal "one of the worst deals ever made", Trump claimed his administration's approach would stop Tehran from acquiring nuclear



weapons rather than enabling it. "If I make a deal with Iran, it will be a good and proper one, not like the one made by Obama," Trump wrote, adding that the earlier agreement gave Iran "a clear and open path to a Nuclear Weapon". The US President also underlined that his administration was in no hurry to conclude talks. "The negotiations are proceeding in an orderly and constructive manner, and I have informed my representatives not to rush into a deal because time is on our side," he wrote. Trump further said economic pres-

sure on Iran would continue until a formal agreement is reached. "The blockade will remain in full force and effect until an agreement is reached, certified, and signed," he added. Trump claims current Iran talks are "exact opposite" of Obama deal. Trump asserted that the proposed agreement being discussed by his administration would be fundamentally different from the Obama-era nuclear pact. "Our deal is the exact opposite," he said, while also acknowledging that negotiations are still incomplete. "It isn't even fully negotiated yet,"

Israel keeps war option open as fragile US-Iran talks gather pace

Jerusalem, May 25: Even as diplomatic efforts between Washington and Tehran showed signs of movement, Israel on Sunday signalled that it was prepared to escalate military action against Iran at short notice. The warning from Israel's top military leadership comes at a sensitive moment in the region, with negotiations underway over a possible extension of the ceasefire and reopening of the Strait of Hormuz. The talks have also revived global attention on Iran's nuclear programme, a red line repeatedly flagged by both Israel and the United States. Chief of the General Staff Eyal Zamir said the Israeli military remained fully prepared for renewed operations against Iran and would continue maintaining operational flexibility. Speaking during a situa-



ational assessment at the military's Northern Command, Zamir said the army was ready to "resume intense combat operations immediately" if required. According to a statement issued by the Israeli military, Zamir said Israel would continue efforts to weaken Iran's capabilities while remaining on high alert for future developments. The remarks came amid reports of progress in ongoing US-Iran discus-

Pope Leo Urges World To 'Slow Down' On AI In Fervent First Manifesto



Vatican, May 25: Pope Leo urged governments to slow down the development of AI systems in his first major document, released on Monday, warning that they spread misinformation, prioritise conflict and "risk leading the world down a path of unending war. Leo, who has adopted a more forceful tone in recent months and has drawn the ire of U.S. President Donald Trump after criticising the Iran 'war, made a range of impassioned appeals to world leaders in the

lengthy text, known as an encyclical. The first U.S. pope called for ownership of AI data not to be left solely in private hands, for policymakers to protect the rights of workers and keep children safe from the technology, and urged the cooling of competition between AI companies. "What is needed is a more active political involvement that is capable of slowing things down when everything is accelerating," said Leo in the text, entitled "Magnificat Humanitas" (Magnificence of Humanity). The pope called for "robust legal frameworks, independent oversight, informed users and a political system that does not abdicate its responsibility." Encyclicals are one of the highest forms of teaching from a pontiff to the Church's 1.4 billion members. Monday's highly anticipated text, spanning nearly 43,000 words, has been in the works nearly since Leo's election as pope a little more than a year ago. **POPE REPUDIATES 'JUST WAR' THEORY** The document, which addressed AI as its main theme, also decried the number of wars roiling the world, lamented the weakening of multilateral organisations and warned that arms industry profits were a driving force behind conflicts.

Couriers, not calls: Khamenei's bunker secrecy is why US-Iran talks are moving at a crawl

Tehran, May 25: Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei is reportedly operating from a secret location under an extraordinary security veil, with even senior Iranian officials unable to directly reach him, according to a CBS News report citing US intelligence officials. The report comes at a time when indirect communication channels between Tehran and the Donald Trump administration remain sluggish, with American officials reportedly struggling to get timely responses from Iran's leadership. US intelligence officials told CBS that the communication bottleneck inside Iran's own system has become one of the major reasons negotiations have moved slowly. According to the report, messages intended for Mojtaba Khamenei are being routed through a complex courier chain designed to conceal his whereabouts. Officials cited by CBS claimed that every exchange takes time, with long delays between proposals sent by the US and responses received



from the Iranian side. The secrecy surrounding the Iranian Supreme Leader has reportedly deepened after Operation Epic Fury, during which Mojtaba Khamenei was said to have been injured in an American and Israeli strikes. The strikes also reportedly wiped out several senior Iranian figures after intelligence agencies penetrated Iran's internal systems. Why communication with Iran's leadership is facing delays CBS News reported that even high-ranking Iranian officials do not know where Mojtaba Khamenei is currently based and have no direct line of communication with him. Instead, messages are relayed through multiple intermediaries to prevent any possibility of his location being exposed. One US official quoted in the

report said the intelligence received from inside Iran during the conflict played a major role in helping American and Israeli agencies identify and eliminate parts of Iran's senior leadership structure. Another official said the responses coming from the Supreme Leader's office often arrive with "a lot of latency", making diplomatic engagement extremely difficult. Mojtaba Khamenei has not appeared publicly since war began. While Iranian state-linked media continue to publish statements attributed to Mojtaba Khamenei, he has not appeared live in public since before the start of the conflict, the report noted. CBS added that the current security arrangements are believed to be aimed at preventing a repeat of the strikes that killed his father, former Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The developments have added to uncertainty around the pace and direction of any future engagement between Washington and Tehran.

'Focus is on ending war': Iran says nuclear issue not part of current US talks

Tehran, May 25: Washington and Tehran appeared to inch closer towards a possible agreement on Monday, even as Iran insisted that the current round of negotiations is focused primarily on ending the conflict rather than discussing technical details of its nuclear programme. Speaking in Tehran, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghai said the ongoing talks are presently centred on halting the war, according to Iran's semi-official ISNA news agency. The remarks come at a time when both the US and Iran are publicly signalling cautious optimism around diplomacy, even as tensions continue to simmer across West Asia. The lat-



est developments also mark a sharp shift in tone after weeks of military escalation, threats over the Strait of Hormuz, and repeated warnings from Tehran against any fresh American action. "The focus of the negotiations is on ending the war, and at this stage, we are not discussing details of the nuclear issue," Baghai said, as quoted by ISNA. Hours

earlier, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio indicated that negotiations between the two sides were moving forward, though he stressed that no final breakthrough had been achieved yet. "We're still a work in progress," Rubio told reporters, adding that discussions included efforts to reopen strategic waterways and launch "a very real, significant time-limited negotiation on the nuclear matters." He also underlined that President Donald Trump would not agree to what he described as a weak or rushed agreement with Tehran. "As the president said, he's not in a hurry, he's not going to make a bad deal. We're going to give diplomacy every chance to succeed before we explore the alternatives," Rubio said. "We're either going to have a good agreement or we're going to have to deal with it another way. We'd prefer to have a good agreement," he added. What Trump said on Iran negotiations, meanwhile, used his Truth Social platform on Sunday to draw a contrast between the negotiations currently underway and the nuclear deal signed during former President Barack Obama's administration. "If I make a deal with Iran, it will be a good and proper one, not like the one made by Obama, which gave Iran massive amounts of CASH, and a clear and open path to a Nuclear Weapon," Trump wrote. "Our deal is the exact opposite," he added, while also saying that negotiations were still incomplete. According to CBS News, citing a senior Trump administration official, negotiators from both countries have already agreed to the broad principles of a possible agreement. The report said Iran had, in principle, accepted terms involving the disposal of highly enriched uranium.

Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi To Visit India For Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting

Tokoyo, May 25: Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi is set to arrive in India on Monday for a two-day visit to participate in the upcoming Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi. To the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Motegi is also scheduled to call on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and hold bilateral talks with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar at Hyderabad House. On Tuesday, the Japanese Foreign Minister will participate in the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting and join the joint press interaction following the discussions. Later in the day, he is also expected to meet PM Modi at Seva Teerth. India is hosting the foreign ministers of the Quad nations in the national capital to discuss the



evolving security situation in the Indo-Pacific region and rising geopolitical tensions in West Asia. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or Quad, brings together India, the United States, Australia, and Japan. The meeting on May 26 will be chaired by EAM Jaishankar. At Jaishankar's invitation, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong, Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, and

Less spending, slow economy: Here's why millions have ditched credit cards in China

Beijing, May 25: China's struggling banking sector is facing a major challenge as crackdown on inactive accounts and weak consumer spending have led to a steep decline in the number of credit cards in the country. In its report on payment earlier this month, the People's Bank of China (PBOC) informed that the number of credit cards owned by consumers in China has come down to 687 million - 9 million less than the preceding three months. South China Morning Post reported. Notably, the total number of accounts holding credit

cards peaked at 807 million in September 2022, but it has reduced by nearly 15 per cent during a 14-straight-quarter decline. Analysts believe that the negative trend highlights the mounting pressure on Chinese lenders dealing with "sustained sluggishness in consumer demand" as well as big rise in non-performing loans. The performance of Chinese banks have faced a road block since 2021 due to being highly exposed to the country's embattled property sector. SCMP report states, Independent analyst Dong Zheng, monitoring mainland China's banking credit card businesses for 26 years, shared that in terms of transaction value, the 12 major listed banks of the mainland have registered an average 11 per cent year-on-year slide on consumers' purchases of goods and services through credit cards last year. This shows that the retail spending was becoming weaker amid a slowing economy. Dong added that transaction value generated by credit cards at these 12 listed banks hit an average 1.9 trillion yuan (US\$279.3 billion) last year. The analyst indicated that the consumption willingness remains weak, while a



"sluggish property market has weighed on Chinese consumers". "Since millions of families have witnessed a great drop in value of their hous-

ing units, they became more cautious on retail spending," he added. With banks reporting declining income from their credit-card business

es, this increases the chances for default risks amid a rising non-performing loan (NPL) ratio. In its earnings report, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, the mainland's largest lender, informed that total debts overdue arising from credit cards accounted for 4.61 per cent of its total at the end of 2025. It was 3.5 per cent a year before that. Qi Xing, chief banking analyst at Northeast Securities, told SCMP that the non-performing loan ratio of credit cards has risen markedly in recent years, and that of some banks has far exceeded

other types of consumer loans" issued by other banks. The threshold has now come down to three. The report further highlights that the pace of issuing new credit cards has declined, while more inactive accounts have been closed over the past four years. In order to tighten regulations on credit card businesses, the PBOC had in July 2022 implemented new rules. Under this, cards having no transactions for 18 consecutive months should represent below 20 per cent of a bank's total number of credit-card accounts.



DC Srinagar visits B&J Hospital Barzulla; Inspects progress of work on alternate entry gate, additional parking space

Takes onsite review of Sunner Kul Bund road development for decongestion of traffic around SMHS & Super Specialty Hospitals

SRINAGAR, MAY 25: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo today conducted a comprehensive visit to Bone and Joint (B&J) Hospital and the Sunner Kul Bund Road behind Super Specialty Hospital Shreen Bagh to inspect ongoing traffic decongestion measures and infrastructure upgradation works around key healthcare facilities in Srinagar district. The visit aimed at assessing the progress of ongoing interventions undertaken to streamline vehicular movement and improve accessibility for patients, attendants and staff visiting the hospitals.



The Deputy Commissioner reviewed the development of an alternate entry gate to the Bone & Joint Hospital, Barzulla.

the Bone & Joint Hospital, construction of ramps and small Link Road connecting the main road with the Parking facilities through the Bund side along Bone and Joint Hospital Barzulla aimed at reducing congestion at the main gate and ensuring smooth passage for ambulances and other emergency vehicles. While taking an on-site assessment of the new parking facility developed to address space constraints around the hospital, the DC was informed that the parking space for attendants and hospital staff is almost completed and will be made functional by June 15, 2026. The DC also reviewed the progress on improvement works of alternate hospital entry gate to minimize bottlenecks to reduce roadside congestion, particularly during peak hours. He was informed that this part of the project is also nearing completion. On the occasion, the DC directed all concerned departments to work in close coordination and ensure early completion of the works to facilitate smooth movement of ambulances and vehicles carrying patients, while reducing traffic interruptions in the larger public interest.

Intensive market checks conducted across Shopian markets

Several expired food items were seized and destroyed on the spot, while violators were fined during the drive. An amount of Rs 2200 was realized during market

SHOPIAN, MAY 25: On the directions of Deputy Commissioner, Shopian, Shishir Gupta market checking drives were conducted today across various areas of Zainapora, Keegam, Herman, Keller and Barbugh and other places in district Shopian under the supervision of concerned Tehsildars and Naib Tehsildars in collaboration with officials from Food Safety, Police and other line departments to ensure quality control, rate regulation and hygiene standards in markets. During the inspections, various shops and business establishments were checked for quality and pricing of essential commodities. Several expired food items were seized and destroyed on the spot, while violators were fined during the drive. An amount of Rs 2200 was realized during market



Market checking in Zainapora, Rs 900 during market inspection in Herman, whereas Rs 4900 was collected from violators during inspections conducted in Keller.

SDM Khansahib conducts tour to review Moharram Arrangements in Shia dominated Areas

BUDGAM, MAY 25: On the directions of Deputy Commissioner Budgam, Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Khansahib, Jahangir Ahmad Gini along with officials of various line departments today conducted an extensive tour of Shia dominated areas including Bukchil, Tallapora, Batpora, Gatipora, Yarisatroo and Hardpanzoo to take stock of the arrangements being put in place for the smooth and hassle-free conduct of upcoming Moharram processions. During the visit, the SDM was accompanied by AEs and officials from R&B, PHE, PDD and Rural Development departments besides local representatives of the concerned areas. The officers inspected



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DC presides over valedictory function, felicitates winners, runner up teams with Trophies, Medals of appreciation

SRINAGAR, MAY 25: District Administration Srinagar's Rolling Trophy Inter-College Cricket Tournament 2026, organized under the Youth Empowerment and Engagement Programme, today concluded with a valedictory function held at SP College Srinagar, marking the successful culmination of the Inter-College sporting event. Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar Akshay Labroo presided over the valedictory ceremony as the Chief Guest and formally felicitated the winning and runner-up teams with trophies, medals, and certificates of appreciation. The event was also attended by Chief Planning Officer Srinagar, Fayaz Ahmad Dar, Nodal



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Youth Empowerment and Engagement Programme

Principal, Kashmir Division Colleges, Seema Naaz, IAS Probationer Alfred Thomas, Principal SP College, Dr. Haris Izzar Tantray, Principal Gandhi Memorial College, Masood Ahmad, District youth Services & Sports Officer, Gulam Hassan, besides enthusiastic participants from students and faculty members of various City Colleges. During the valedictory address, the DC emphasized that initiatives under the Youth Empowerment and Engagement Programme are designed to provide constructive avenues for young people, encouraging them to actively participate in academic, cultural, and sports-related activities. He reiterated that such platforms play a crucial role in channelizing youth energy in a positive direction and strengthening community engagement at the grassroots level. The DC emphasized that the District Administration Srinagar will provide similar platforms to students to showcase their talent by organizing events including cultural feast, entrepreneur feast, science & technology events under 12 month long. Under the Youth Empowerment and Engagement Programme to nurture sporting talent and build a strong sports culture within the district. The DC commended the efforts of the organizing Committee. Nodal Principal Colleges Kashmir, SP College and sports coordinators for ensuring the smooth conduct of the tournament by involving youth in constructive and healthy pursuits. He stated that the event also play a key role in promoting sportsmanship, youth engagement, physical well-being and awareness against social evils through constructive extracurricular.

Awareness programmes organised across Budgam under Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan

BUDGAM, MAY 20: A series of awareness programmes, pledge ceremonies and outreach activities were organised across district Budgam under the Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan (NMB) to spread awareness about the harmful effects of drug abuse and to encourage collective responsibility towards building a healthy and drug-free society. A Mental Health Awareness Programme under the Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan was organised at PM SHRI Government Higher Secondary School Dager Budgam. During the programme, students were sensitized about emotional well-being, stress management, healthy living and the importance of staying away from



Participants actively took part in the awareness session and were encouraged to seek support and guidance whenever needed. Meanwhile, a Nasha Mukta Bharat pledge ceremony was organised at the office of Sub Divisional Agriculture Officer Budgam. Officials and staff reaffirmed their commitment towards spreading awareness against drug abuse and

Road Safety, Legal Awareness Drive conducted in Ganderbal

GANDERBAL, MAY 25: Under the chairmanship of Abdul Nasir, chairman district legal services authority Ganderbal and under the guidance of sheikh Babar Hussain, secretary district legal services authority Ganderbal, the district legal services authority in collaboration with ARTO Ganderbal conducted road safety and legal awareness drive at Duderhama Ganderbal. Burjeena Hameed and Shaheena Ali, Assistant Legal Aid Defence Counsels, actively participated in the awareness drive and distributed pamphlets and awareness material among the participants. The campaign focused on various aspects of road safety including adherence to traffic rules, mandatory use of helmets and seat belts, prevention of rash and negligent driving, avoidance of over-speeding and observation of statutory obligations under the Motor Vehicles laws.

During the programme, emphasis was also laid upon the importance of legal awareness in safeguarding the rights and safety of citizens and on the role of Legal Services Institutions in promoting access to justice and dissemination of legal literacy among the masses. The Assistant Regional Transport Officer (ARTO) Ganderbal extended full cooperation for the successful conduct of the awareness drive by providing informative pamphlets and road safety awareness material for public distribution. The participants appreciated the joint initiative undertaken by DLSA Ganderbal and ARTO Ganderbal and actively responded to the awareness campaign. The programme concluded with a collective resolve to continue such awareness initiatives in the larger public interest for promoting road safety, legal consciousness and responsible citizenship.

JKEDI concludes Management Development Programme -9 under RAMP Initiative

SRINAGAR, MAY 25: Jammu and Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI), Srinagar, successfully concluded the 9th Management Development Programme (MDP-9) under the Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) Initiative at its District Office, Srinagar. The programme focused on building entrepreneurial and managerial capacity among 22 women entrepreneurs from Srinagar. Through structured training modules, participants were equipped with essential skills in business plan-

ning, financial management, marketing, and regulatory compliance to establish sustainable and growth-oriented enterprises. The valedictory ceremony was graced by Shabir Hussain Shah, District Nodal Officer, JKEDI Srinagar, and Syed Miftah Andrabi, Manager, JKEDI. Addressing the participants, Shabir Hussain Shah appreciated their active involvement and enthusiasm throughout the programme. He urged the trainees to leverage the knowledge and skills gained to build scalable businesses and contribute to local economic development. He further emphasized that such capacity-building initiatives are crucial for promoting grassroots entrepreneurship and empowering women. Participants expressed deep gratitude to JKEDI for its guidance and for creating a platform that strengthens women-led enterprises in the region. The RAMP initiative, supported by the Ministry of MSME, Govt. of India, and the World Bank, aims to enhance the performance and competitiveness of MSMEs across J&K.

DC Srinagar, SSP review impact of ongoing 100-day anti-drug campaign; Call for continued collective enforcement efforts

84 FIRs registered, 117 arrested, 100 driving licences, 46 RCs, 17 chemist licences suspended, illegal properties worth Rs 4 crore linked to drug peddlers attached or demolished during ongoing anti-drug crackdown in Srinagar

SRINAGAR, MAY 25: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo today chaired a meeting of the District Level NCORD Committee to review the impact and progress achieved under the ongoing 100-day anti-drug campaign being implemented across the district. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Dr. Sundeep Chakravarty was also present in the meeting. The meeting was attended by Regional Transport Officer Kashmir, Qazi Irfan; Additional Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Aadil Fared; SP Headquarter, Umar Shah; IAS Probationer, Alfred Thomas; SDM West, Irfan Bahadur; SDM East,



Zubair Ahmad; and Officers from Excise, Drug Control Organisation, DYS&S, heads of ATF's and Officers of other concerned departments. At the outset, the meeting held a comprehensive review of the District's anti-drug strategy, enforcement actions and preventive interventions undertaken during the ongoing 100-days anti-drug Jammu and Kashmir Nasha Mukta Abhiyan. During the meeting, it was informed that intensified enforcement operations and coordinated action against drug peddling networks have yielded significant results across Srinagar district. Giving detailed figures, the meeting was informed that 84 FIRs have been registered under NDPS cases and 117 persons have been arrested during the ongoing campaign. It was further reported that 100 driving licences and 46 vehicle Registration Certificates (RCs) linked to NDPS-related violations have been suspended to date, as part of sustained and strict enforcement measures aimed at disrupting drug networks and deterring drug-related activities in the district. The meeting was further informed that licences of 17 chemists were suspended for violations related to drug regulations and unauthorized handling of controlled substances. In addition, red entries have been recorded in revenue records against identified drug peddlers.

LG Sinha visits sacred Hazratbal Shrine; reviews preparations for the Eid ul-Adha



SRINAGAR, MAY 25: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha today visited the sacred Hazratbal Shrine to review the preparations for the upcoming auspicious festival of Eid ul-Adha.

He was accompanied by Dr Syed Darakhshan Andrabi, Chairperson, J&K Waqf Board; Mufti Reyaz ul Haq, Chief Imam Hazratbal Shrine; Anshul Garg, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir; Rajiv Omprakash, DIG CKR; Dr GV Sundep Chakravarty, SSP Srinagar; Akshay Labroo, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar; Faz Lul Haseeb, Municipal Commissioner Srinagar and officials from all line departments.

During his visit, the Lieutenant

Governor took appraisal of the water supply, sanitation, electricity and other facilities being put in place for smooth conduct of the festival. He instructed the senior officers to ensure that every arrangement is carried out with diligence. "The festival reminds us of the virtues of humility and charity, inspiring us to dedicate ourselves to the greater good of humanity. We will ensure that the celebration is not only well-organized but also truly grand, marked by devotion and festive fervor," the Lieutenant Governor said. Spiritual leaders, Waqf officials, senior officers of Police and Civil administration and prominent citizens were also present.

CS reviews implementation of PM's reform agenda

Calls for integrated governance, process simplification and full digitization of services across J&K

SRINAGAR, MAY 25: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, today chaired a high-level review meeting with Administrative Secretaries of all departments to assess the Action Taken Reports (ATRs) on implementation of actionable points emerging from the Prime Minister's interaction with Secretaries to the Government of India, with special emphasis on strengthening the "Whole of Government" approach, enhancing Ease of Living through end-to-end digitization of public services and undertaking comprehensive process reforms across the country. During the meeting, the Chief Secretary reiterated that the core objective of these reforms is to establish integrated governance, citizen-centric administration and technology-driven systems aimed at ensuring efficient,



transparent and accountable delivery of services. He emphasized that departments must move beyond conventional silo-based functioning and work in close coordination to achieve larger developmental goals envisioned under 'Viksit Bharat @2047'. A detailed presentation on the Action Taken Reports pertaining to various reform initiatives was given by the Planning & Monitoring Department. The meeting was informed that several departments

including Finance, School Education, Skill Development, Health & Medical Education, Housing & Urban Development, Agriculture Production, Social Welfare, Public Works, Tourism and Higher Education Departments have already adopted convergence-based governance models involving inter-departmental coordination, digital integration and collaborative implementation mechanisms. Regarding the points of School Education

Department it was revealed that vocational education has been expanded to more than 1,350 schools across Jammu & Kashmir with enrolment of over 1.41 lakh students, besides integration of digital platforms, ICT laboratories and smart classrooms under the framework of NEP-2020. Similarly with respect to the Skill Development Department it was highlighted that flagship initiatives including Mission YUVA and PM Vishwakarma are being implemented through coor-

dated institutional mechanisms involving multiple departments, financial institutions and academic organisations. The Health & Medical Education Department proposed integrated planning with allied departments for convergence of health, sanitation, nutrition, education and livelihood initiatives, while the Housing & Urban Development Department highlighted its focus on technology-driven governance, sustainable urban planning and citizen-centric reforms for improving urban living standards. The meeting was further informed that departments including Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, ARI & Trainings, Disaster Management, Labour & Employment and Information Department have introduced integrated digital governance.

CLUJ hosts 2-Day Faculty Orientation Workshop at PSPS Gandhi Nagar

JAMMU, MAY 25: A Two-Day Faculty Orientation Workshop on "Strengthening Project-Based Learning & Design Your Degree (DYD) Pedagogy" was successfully organized by Cluster University of Jammu at PSPS Government College for Women Gandhi Nagar. The workshop aimed to familiarize faculty members with innovative teaching methodologies under the Design Your Degree (DYD) framework and promote experiential and project-based learning practices in higher education.

The programme was inaugurated by Dr. K. S. Chandrasekar, Vice Chancellor, Cluster University of Jammu in the presence of Dr. Sheikh Ajaz Bashir, Director Colleges, who attended as Guest of Honour. Among the distinguished dignitaries present were Ankur Mahajan, Registrar, CLUJ; Dr. Twinkle Suri, Dean Academic Affairs, CLUJ; Dr. Shobha Baghai and Dr. Alpna Vohra. Faculty members and



Principals from various colleges across Jammu division participated enthusiastically in the programme. Welcoming the participants, Dr. Twinkle Suri highlighted the growing need for learner-centric and interdisciplinary approaches in higher education. Principal of GCW Gandhi Nagar, Dr. Kulvinder Kour, encouraged faculty members to actively adapt to evolving educational practices that promote creativity, collaboration and critical thinking among students. Addressing the gathering, Dr. Sheikh Ajaz Bashir emphasized

the significance of project-based learning in making education more practical, skill-oriented, and meaningful for students. Dr. Shobha Baghai shared valuable insights into the implementation of the Design Your Degree framework and stressed the importance of flexible and interdisciplinary learning models for holistic student development. Speaking on the objectives of the DYD initiative, Dr. Alpna Vohra elaborated on how the pedagogy empowers students to design their academic pathways in accordance with their interests, abilities

and career aspirations. During the event, the Vice Chancellor formally unveiled the banner of the Design Your Degree initiative and appreciated the efforts of faculty members working towards academic innovation and excellence. In his address, Dr. K. S. Chandrasekar underlined the importance of transformative education in line with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. He remarked that project-based learning and the DYD framework would help students emerge as independent learners, critical thinkers and socially responsible citizens. The workshop also featured a series of academic sessions conducted by eminent experts. Prof. Shobha Baghai delivered a session on "Introduction to DYD: Pedagogical Challenges in Adopting DYD," focusing on the conceptual framework and institutional challenges in implementing learner-centric education.

DG NCC calls on Minister Sakeena Itoo at Srinagar



SRINAGAR, MAY 25: Director General of the National Cadet Corps (NCC), Lt. General Virendra Vats today called on Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo, and apprised her of the activities and outreach programmes being undertaken by the NCC across Jammu and Kashmir. During the meeting, the Director General highlighted the role of the NCC in shaping youth through discipline, leader-

ship, patriotism and community service. He informed the Minister about various initiatives being carried out to encourage greater participation of students in NCC activities, especially in remote and border areas of the Union Territory. Lt. General Virendra Vats also briefed the Minister about the ongoing training programmes, adventure activities, awareness campaigns and social service initiatives being conducted by NCC units in J&K. He

underscored the organisation's efforts towards youth empowerment and nation-building by engaging cadets in constructive and character-building activities. He also briefed the Minister about the participation of J&K Youth in NCC, especially the girls/women folk. The Minister appreciated the contribution of the NCC in nurturing discipline, confidence and a spirit of service among the youth. She lauded the organisation for providing young students with opportunities for personality development, leadership training and national integration. The Minister also assured the Director General of all possible support from the Government for carrying out various activities across J&K for the welfare of youth.

Udhampur Admin hosts Mushaira under Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan campaign



UDHAMPUR, MAY 25: A theme-based Mushaira under the ongoing Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan campaign was organized today by the District Administration Udhampur here at Bhartiya College of Education. The initiative aimed to spread awareness against drug abuse and encourage youth towards a healthy and positive lifestyle. Deputy Commissioner Minga Sherpa was the chief guest on the occasion, while Superintendent of Police Anripal Singh was the guest of honor at the inaugural session of the programme. Addressing the gathering, the DC highlighted the importance of collective social responsi-

bility in eliminating the menace of drugs from society. "The fight against substance abuse requires active participation from educational institutions, youth, parents and civil society," the DC emphasized and urged students to become ambassadors of the anti-drug campaign and motivate others to stay away from drugs. Earlier, the Chairman of Bhartiya College of Education accorded a warm welcome to the Chief Guest and other guests. He appreciated the initiative of the District Administration in creating awareness through literary and cultural platforms. DIG Udhampur Reasi Range Shiv Kumar Sharma joined the concluding.

renowned as well as budding poets of different colleges of the district. They presented thought-provoking poetry and literary works centered on the theme 'Say No to Drugs, Yes to Life'. Through their powerful verses, the poets conveyed a strong message against drug abuse and inspired the audience to adopt a healthy and drug-free lifestyle. Students, faculty members and guests attended the programme in large numbers and appreciated the initiative taken by the District Administration in creating awareness through literary and cultural platforms. DIG Udhampur Reasi Range Shiv Kumar Sharma joined the concluding.

Satish Sharma attends Education Expo Jammu; exhorts youth to embrace education, sports

JAMMU, MAY 25: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, IT, Youth Services & Sports, Transport and Science & Technology, Satish Sharma today called upon young people to embrace education, discipline and sports as the pillars of personal growth and nation-building. The Minister was addressing the Education Expo Jammu 2026 organised by The Times of India at Country Inn, Jammu. Stressing the need for holistic development of youth, the Minister underscored the importance of nurturing values, character and resilience alongside academic excellence to shape a stronger and progressive society. Addressing the students, educators, parents and dignitaries present on the occasion, the Minister described education as a transformative force that extends far beyond academic achievement. He emphasized that education must nurture character, discipline, integrity and social responsibility alongside intellectual growth. Satish Sharma appreciated The Times of India for creating a platform that connects the students



with opportunities and inspiration, stating that such initiatives play a significant role in shaping aspirations and guiding young minds towards meaningful careers and brighter futures. Highlighting the importance of health and nutrition in shaping future generations, Satish Sharma underlined the need for adopting healthy lifestyles and making informed choices. He urged the youth to value natural and wholesome food habits, stressing that a healthy body forms the foundation for academic excellence and over-

all success. Satish Sharma strongly advocated the role of sports in building discipline, resilience and character among young people. Expressing concern over the growing menace of drug abuse, he cautioned that substance abuse threatens the future of society and can derail promising lives and careers. "Sports create strong minds and strong character. A culture of sports encourages discipline, determination and positive engagement among youth. We must collectively strengthen

this culture and inspire our young generation to choose healthy pathways," he said. The Minister reiterated the government's commitment towards strengthening the sports infrastructure, expanding opportunities for youth participation and creating a supportive ecosystem for talent development across Jammu and Kashmir. He urged the students to reject drugs and embrace sports, discipline and constructive pursuits. Calling for a broader understanding of education, Satish Sharma remarked that true education is not merely the accumulation of information but the cultivation of complete human beings capable of thinking clearly, acting responsibly and serving society selflessly. "The future of Jammu and Kashmir lies in the strength, character and aspirations of its youth. We must empower them with opportunities, values and confidence," he added. The Minister encouraged the students to remain confident, work hard and contribute positively towards society and nation-building.

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